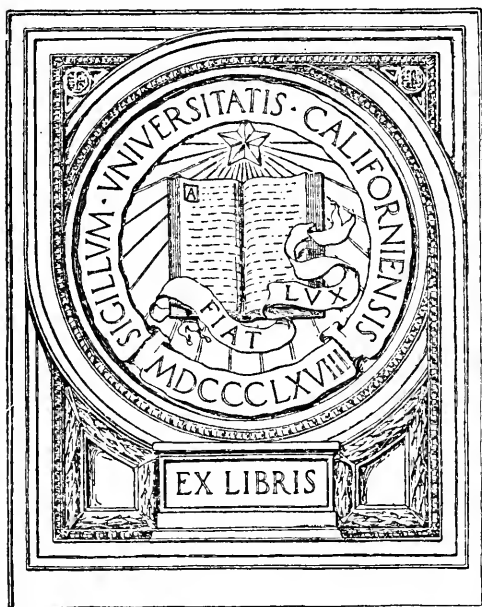
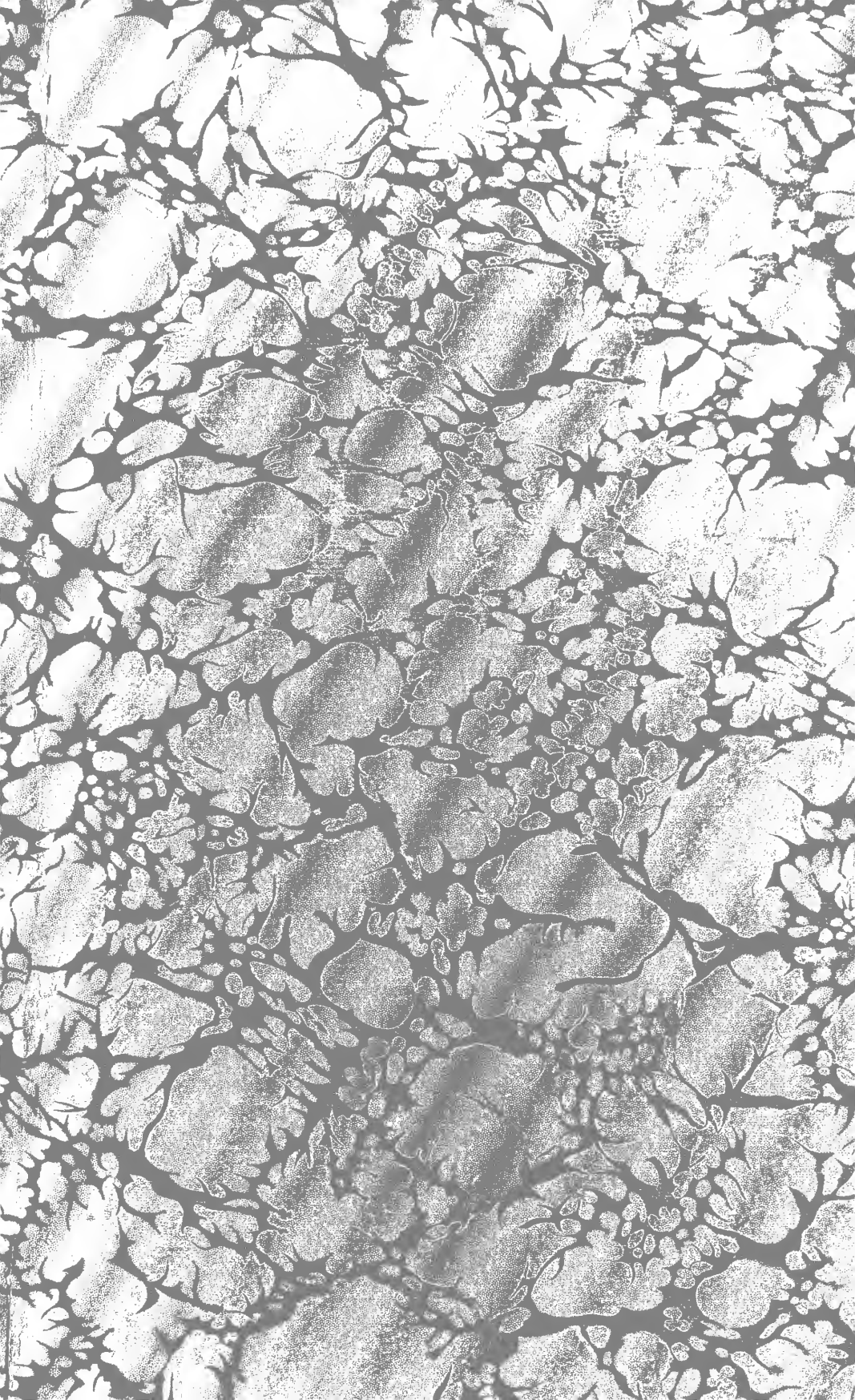


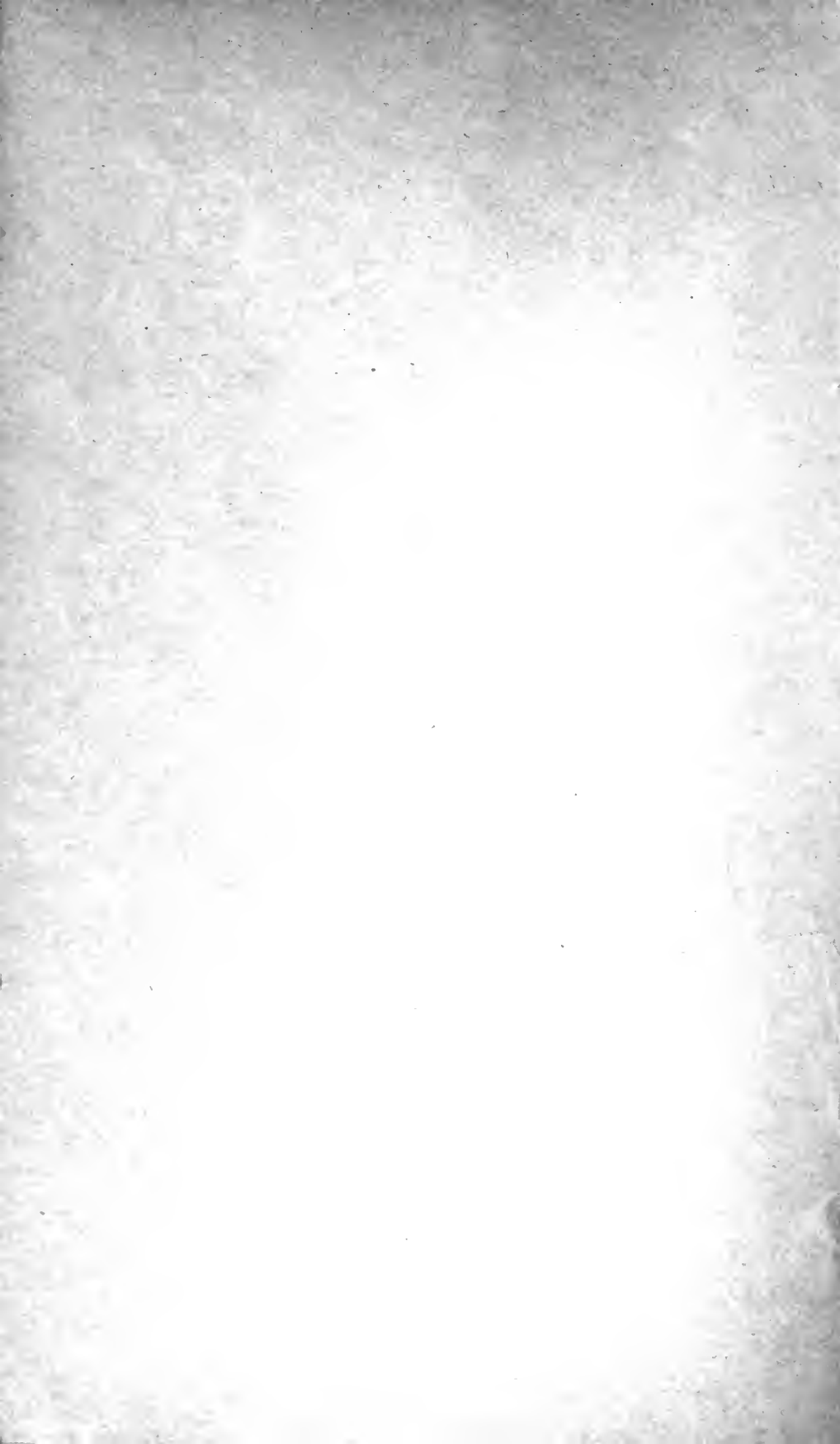
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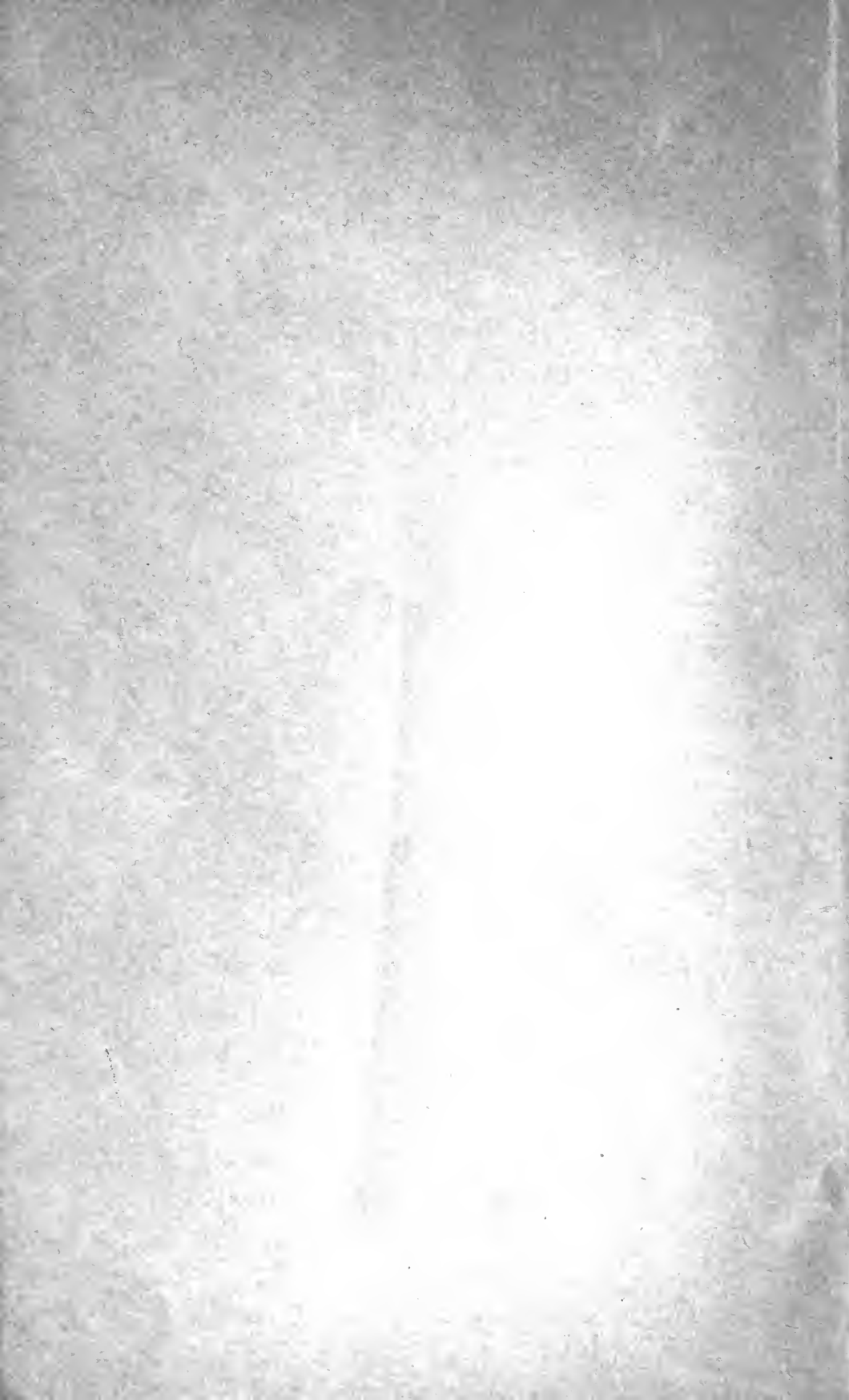
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Piers Plowman, the Work of One or
of Five

J. J. JUSSERAND

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PIERS PLOWMAN

THE WORK OF ONE OR OF FIVE

I

Next to the *Canterbury Tales*, the poem usually called *Piers Plowman* is the greatest literary work produced by England during the Middle Ages; and it was considered so from the first, these two poems being almost equally popular. Fifty-seven manuscripts have preserved for us Chaucer's tales; forty-five *Piers Plowman*. This latter work is a unique monument, much more singular and apart from anything else than Chaucer's masterpiece. It is more thoroughly English; of foreign influences on it there are but the faintest traces. Allegorical as it is, it gives us an image of English life in the fourteenth century of unsurpassed vividness. If we had only Chaucer we would know much less; Chaucer is at his best when describing individuals; his portraits are priceless. The author of *Piers Plowman* concerns himself especially with classes of men, great political movements, the general aspirations of the people, the improvements necessary in each class for the welfare of the nation. Contemporary events and the lessons to be deducted from them, the hopes, anxieties, problems, and sufferings occupying his compatriots' minds, are never far from his thoughts: plague, storms, French wars, question of labor and wages, bishops becoming royal functionaries, power of the Commons and the king, duties of the nobles, the priests, the workmen. He does not

Chaucer 1926

describe them simply to add picturesque touches, but to express what he feels and show how the nation should be governed and be morally improved. He is not above his time, but of it; he is not a citizen of the world, but a thoroughgoing Englishman and nothing else. Alone in Europe, and, what is more remarkable, alone in his country, he gives us a true impression of the grandeur of the internal reform that had been going on in England during the century: the establishment on a firm basis of that institution, unique then, and destined to be imitated throughout the world, in both hemispheres five hundred years later, the Westminster Parliament. The equivalent of such a line as the following one on the power of king, nobles, and Commons:

Knyghthood hym ladde,
Might of the comunes made hym to regne,¹

can be found nowhere in the whole range of mediaeval literature; it has but one real equivalent (inaccessible then to the public), the Rolls of Parliament.

No one came in any way near this writer, less than any the great man who, from the window of his chamber in Aldgate tower, cast such a friendly look on the world, such a true citizen of it that, although he had taken part in the French wars, one could, but for the language, read his whole works without guessing on which side he had fought. Himself a member of Parliament, he who described so many men of so many sorts has not left in the whole series of his works a line, a word, allowing his readers to suspect the magnitude of the change England was undergoing; even Froissart gives a better idea of it than he does. His franklin he describes as having been "ful ofte tyme" a "knight of the schire," and instead of something on the part he may have played then, we simply get thereupon the information that

An anlas and a gipser al of silk
Heng at his gerdul, whit as morne mylk.

Neither of these two great authors is entirely lacking in the qualities of the other; but reading Chaucer we know better what England looked like, reading *Piers Plowman* we know better what she felt, suffered from, and longed for.

¹ B, Prol. 112.

Deeply concerned with the grave problems confronting his countrymen, the author of *Piers Plowman* seems to have been one of those writers, not a unique case in literature, whose life and book develop together, the one reflecting necessarily the change that years and circumstances may have worked in the other. The life and the book of such men as Montaigne, Rabelais, Tasso, Cervantes, especially the two former, may be quoted as offering parallelisms of the same order.

The *Piers Plowman* visions, made up of a mixture of vague allegories and intensely vivid realities, deal with three principal episodes, the main lines of which the author seems to have had in his mind from the first, the episode of Meed, the episode of Piers Plowman, and the search for Dowel, Dobet, Dobest. Piers Plowman reappears in the last episode; he is the most important and characteristic personage in the work, hence its title. The author, who, like Montaigne for his essays, seems to have been constantly rewriting his poem, gave, as is well known, three principal versions of it, which can be dated from the historical allusions in them: A, 1362-63; B, 1376-77; C, 1398-99.

When a man takes, so to say, for his life's companion and confidant a work of his, adding new parts or new thoughts as years pass on, and as events put their impress on his mind, the way in which these remakings are carried on is ever the same: circumstances command them. The author has before him a copy of his first and shortest text, and he makes here and there, as it occurs to him, an emendation, alters a word or a passage which he thinks he can improve, or which no longer corresponds to his way of thinking; he corrects mistakes and occasionally forgets to correct them, he develops an idea, adds examples and quotations, and sometimes new passages, clashing with others written years before which he forgets to erase, writes a continuation, a new book, a new part. The emendations or additions in the already written text are crammed into the margin or written on slips or fly-leaves. That this practice was in use in the Middle Ages, we might have surmised, as it is difficult to imagine any other; but we know in fact that it was so, as some few samples of manuscripts of this sort have come down to us; manuscripts in which "the author has made

corrections, additions, or suppressions, between the lines, on the margins, and sometimes on separate sheets or fragments of vellum inserted in the quire. It is not always easy to see where those modifications should come in."¹

Great care has been, indeed, ever necessary to prevent mistakes in such cases; they have, in fact, scarcely ever been avoided. Glaring ones remain in works of this sort, of whatever epoch, and which we know to have been revised sometimes by the authors themselves, sometimes by their trustiest friends after their death, and at periods, too, when more attention was paid to correct texts and logical development than in the days of the Plantagenets.

A famous example of this way of rewriting a book is that of Montaigne, whose copy of his own essays, prepared in view of one last edition, is preserved at Bordeaux, the margins covered with scribbled additions,² other additions having certainly been inscribed on slips or fly-leaves (now lost), as they are to be found, not always at their proper place, in the undoubtedly authentic text published soon after Montaigne's death by those devoted friends and admirers of his, Pierre de Brach and Mlle de Gournay.

Superabundant proofs may be given that the author of *Piers Plowman* wrote his revisions in a similar way, handing, however, to less careful people (professional scribes) material requiring more care, with some slips, fly-leaves, afterthoughts, and marginal additions difficult to place at the proper spot. An original with all the leaves, sheets, and slips in good order or comparatively so would yield comparatively good copies; then, by some accident, leaves and slips would get mixed, and scribes would reproduce with perfect composure this jumble of incoherent patches, thus betraying the loose and scrappy state of the text before them, and their own obtuseness.³ Tentative additions, written by the author

¹ Letter from Mr. Léopold Delisle to the author, Chantilly, August 3, 1908. An example of a MS with alterations in the primitive text effected by means of slips of vellum pasted on certain passages, is the MS Royal 14, c, vii, in the British Museum, containing the *Historia Anglorum* of Matthew Paris.

² A facsimile page accompanies P. Bonnefon's contribution to the *Histoire de la littérature française* of P. de Julleville, Vol. III, p. 466.

³ A striking example is that offered by two important MSS of A, one at University College, Oxford, and the Rawlinson Poet. 137, at the Bodleian. Both were copied from the same original which offered a good text, but the leaves or slips wherewith it was made had got disarranged and had been put together in wrong order. Both scribes carefully reproduced

on the margin or on scraps, to be later definitively admitted or not into the text, were inserted haphazard anywhere by some copyists and let alone by others.¹ In his next revision the poet never failed to remove a number of errors left in the previous text, always, however, forgetting a few.

As shown by the condition of MSS, the poet let copyists transcribe his work at various moments, when it was in the making (it was indeed ever in the making), and was in a far from complete and perfect state; sometimes when part or the whole of an episode was lacking, or when it ended with a canto or passus merely sketched and left unfinished.² The scribes who copied the MS Harl. 875 and the Lincoln's Inn MS had apparently before them an original of version A, containing only the first eight passus, that is, the episodes of Meed and Piers. Almost all the other MSS of A have eleven passus and contain the story of Meed, Piers, and the same jumble of incoherent parts. The University College MS "is regular down to passus II, 25, which is immediately followed (on the same page) by passus VII, 71-213, and then returns to l. 132 of passus I, the last four lines of passus I and some twenty lines of passus II occurring twice over. It then goes down to passus VII, 70, when the passage which had already occurred is omitted." In the other MS: "the text is in precisely the same wrong order," says Skeat in the Preface of A, pp. xx and 143* (Early Engl. Text Soc.). Other examples might be quoted. In the MS Cotton, Vespasian B, XVI, in the British Museum, containing a text of C, "written before 1400," and therefore contemporary with the author, passus XVIII was copied from separate sheets or scraps which had also got mixed, so that after XVIII, 186, comes XVIII, 288, "then comes XVIII, 187; then XVIII, 259-287; then XVIII, 188-258, after which comes XVIII, 289, and all the rest of the passus."—Skeat, Preface of C, p. xl.

¹ Of this sort are, to all appearances, the additional lines in the MS Harl. 875 of A, not to be found elsewhere, especially the two passages giving, as in a parenthesis, some supplementary touches, on Fals and on Favel, one of four and the other of three lines (II, 136, 141). In the MS of C, belonging to the Earl of Ilchester, a passage (X, 75-281, Skeat, Preface of C, p. xxxiv) is twice repeated with considerable differences, one of the two versions being, it seems, a first cast of the other. Finding both in the copy before him, the scribe quietly transcribed the two.

Another remarkable example is the one to which Professor Manly drew attention: The four or five lines added at the moment when Piers Plowman is about to make his will, and giving the names of his wife and children (A, VII, 70). They had obviously been written apart on the margin or on a slip, to be inserted later and be duly connected with the bulk of the text. The copyists inserted them as they were, at the place opposite which they found them, and so they form a crude and strange parenthesis. The scribes wrote them, however, precisely as a sort of parenthesis, which was showing more intelligence than in some other cases; the sign indicating a new paragraph usually precedes them; such is the case in the excellent MS Laud 581, fol. 27. The additional MS 35, 287, fol. 29b, not only has the same sign, but a blank precedes these lines, so as to show that they are really something apart.

² MS Rawlinson Poet. 38, in the Bodleian, is, as Mr. Skeat has pointed out (preface of B, p. xii, E. E. T. S.), a copy of the B text with some additions and afterthoughts (about one hundred and sixty lines in all), destined to be incorporated later, with a large quantity of others, in the C text. It represents, therefore, one more state in which the work was allowed by the author to be copied. It seems scarcely probable that an independent reviser should have revised so little and allowed the work to be copied after such slight changes.

part of Dowel. Two, however, give us a fragment, and a third, what purports to be the whole of a twelfth passus,¹ a mere sketch anyhow, almost entirely discarded in subsequent revisions. It does not in any case end the story of Dowel; much less does it give what the beginning of the episode had led us to expect concerning Dobet and Dobest. Of these two we were to hear only in the B and C texts, written later, which were also allowed to be copied before they were finished; they were, indeed, never finished at all. Both contain, besides the Meed and the Plowman episodes, seven passus on Dowel, four on Dobet, and only two on Dobest. That the author did not intend to end there is shown, not only because it does not really end (in allegorical matters, it is true, one may end almost anywhere), not only on account of the abnormal brevity of the Dobest part, but also because, in the Bodleian MS Laud 656 of the C text, one of the best and most trustworthy, after the conclusion of the second and last *de facto* passus on Dobest, occur the words: "Explicit passus secundus de dobest et incipit passus tercius." These words do not seem to have been added, as Mr. Skeat suggests, by mistake, but because the copyist read them in his original. That a continuation was really expected is shown by the blank pages left for it: the leaf on which this note appears, as well as the three following ones (somewhat damaged by somebody who wanted bits of vellum and cut off some strips), remain blank in the MS, and these leaves belong, as I have recently verified, to the quire on which the Visions are written, not to the work coming next in the book.

Works of the *Piers Plowman* type are rarely finished. The life of men who take their book for their confidant comes to an end before their book does. The English dreamer no more finished his *Piers Plowman* than Montaigne his *Essays*, or Rabelais his *Gargantua*. But while the author allowed incomplete texts to go about, there is no doubt that each successive episode was in

¹The MS of version A at University College, Oxford, has 18 lines of this twelfth passus; the Ingilby MS has 88 lines and there stops short, the state of the MS showing, according to Skeat (*Parallel Extracts of 45 MSS*; Early Engl. Text Soc., p. 29), that the scribe had no more to copy. The MS Rawlinson Poet. 137, at the Bodleian, contains what purports to be the whole passus, but as, in this case also, the original MS did not supply a complete text, a man called John But, of whom more hereafter, took upon himself to add to it a sensational ending of his invention.

his mind when he laid down his pen after having finished the foregoing one, which shows sameness and continuity of purpose. For the two first, Meed and Piers, though more loosely connected than the rest, there can be no doubt, as they were written together in the same mood and style, and made public together; there is no copy where they appear separate. For the last episode, a tripartite one, dealing with Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest, the connection with the previous ones is established by the last part of the last passus (VIII) concerning Piers, where the author represents himself pondering about Dowel and the necessity of securing his help: pardons, Pope's bulls, triennals will be no good, "bote Dowel the helpe;" may we so behave, "er we gon hennes," that we may claim then, "we duden as he (Dowel) us hizte."¹ That the Dowel episode would come next, if anything came, is thus made obvious; that it would be a tripartite one is shown from the beginning of this new part: (1) MSS of the A text have there such a heading as, "Incipit hic Dowel, Dobet, et Dobest," making clear what was the ultimate purpose of the author, though as a matter of fact Dowel alone, and only in part, was yet written; (2) The text itself of the first passus concerning Dowel also forecasts the treble account which was to be given only years later, in versions B and C, but was, even so early as 1362, in the author's mind. In the very first passus concerning Dowel (ninth of the whole work) Thought calls the dreamer's attention to those three beings, those three steps toward perfection:

"Dowel," quod he, "and Dobet and Dobest þe pridde
Beoþ þreo faire vertues and beoþ not fer to fynde."²

That these three versions of the *Piers Plowman* poem exist is certain; that they were written by someone cannot be considered a rash surmise. Of that one we know little; but that little is considerably better than nothing; better than in the case of more than one mediaeval work of value, *Morte d'Arthur*, for example, *Gawayne and the Green Knight*, or *Pearl*, in which cases we are reduced to mere suppositions.

For *Piers Plowman*, we have what the manuscripts tell us in their titles, colophons, or marginal notes; what the author tells us

¹ A, VIII, 187.

² A, IX, 69.

himself in his verses; and what tradition has to say, being represented by one man at least whose testimony is of real weight.

Without exception, all those titles, colophons, marginal notes, and testimonies agree in pointing to the succession of visions, forming, at first, 8 or 12, and lastly 23 passus, as being one work, having for its general title *Piers Plowman*, and written by one author. MSS containing the three episodes of Meed, *Piers Plowman* properly so called, and Dowel, begin thus: "Hic incipit liber qui vocatur pers plowman;"¹ and end thus: "Explicit tractatus de perys plowman."² The continuity of the work is also shown by the numeration of the passus in several MSS; the MS Add. 35,287, for example, of text B, where we are told, at the end of the *Piers Plowman* episode, that the new passus now beginning is, at the same time, the first of Dowel and the eighth of the total work;³ when we have had not only Dowel, but Dobet and Dobest, occurs then the colophon: "Explicit hic Dialogus petri plowman." The excellent MS Laud 581, also of text B, at the Bodleian, has the same way of counting the passus: "Passus octavus de visione et primus de dowel. . . . Passus xvj^{us}, et primus de dobet."⁴

The manuscripts thus connect together the several parts of the poem, showing that one whole work, under the general title of *Piers Plowman*, is in question. In the same fashion, all the notes found on their leaves, the allusion in the work, and tradition, attribute the poem to one single author.

Some of these notes vary as to the name or the form of the name or surname; not one implies more than one author for the whole. At the end of the *Piers Plowman* episode properly so called, three MSS have the note: "Explicit visio Willelmi W. de petro Plowman. Et hic incipit visio *eiusdem* de Dowel."⁵ Three MSS assert therefore, in express fashion, that Dowel and the rest are by the same author. The more probable name and surname

¹ MS Rawlinson Poet. 137, in the Bodleian, a text of A, the only one with John But's addition, dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century.

² MS Harl. 3954, ab. 1420 (Skeat), containing 11 passus, and being a mixture of the A and B versions.

³ Fol. 36. This MS, now in the British Museum, was formerly the MS Ashburnham CXXIX.

⁴ Fol. 33a and 62a; same colophon: "Explicit hic dialogus petri plowman."

⁵ (1) An early MS belonging to the Earl of Ilchester; (2) the MS Douce 104, in the Bodleian Library, dated 1427; (3) the MS Digby 102, same library, middle of fifteenth

for our author are William Langland (or Longlond). The name William occurs in a number of places and cannot be doubted: "Incipit visio Willelmi Explicit visio Willelmi. . . . A lovely lady calde me by name—And seide, 'Wille, slepest thou?'" ¹

"What art thou?" quath ich "that my name knowest?"

"That wost thou, Wille," quath he "and no wight betere." ²

The surname Langland (Longlond) is to be found in full in a punning line of the B text, the syllables being arranged in a reversed order:

I have lyved in *londe*, quod I My name is *longe Wille*. ³

If we discarded the punning intention, the line would have little enough meaning: to "live in land" does not convey any very clear idea; so little indeed, that when revising his text for the third time, and choosing not to repeat his confidence, the author not only suppressed the "longe Wille," but also the "lived in londe," which left alone would have, to be sure, betrayed nothing, but would have been simply meaningless. He wrote:

Ich have lived in London meny longe ȝeres. ⁴

That the line was of interest as giving the author's name was not noticed only by the critics of today; it drew attention from the first. In the margin of the MS Laud 581, opposite the before-

century, all three containing the C text. See Skeat's edition (E. E. T. S.) of C, pp. xxxvii, xlv, xlv. The word represented by an initial (W.), an abbreviation habitually recalling the place of birth or origin, has been hypothetically, and with no certitude, interpreted as meaning "Wigorniensis" (Skeat) or "of Wychwood" (Pearson).

¹ C, II, 5.

² C, XI, 71.

³ B, XV, 148.

⁴ C, XVII, 286. To give one's name, or someone else's, in a more or less enigmatical fashion was quite customary in Langland's day. Mr. Skeat has been the first to show that when he spoke of the "the wikked Nest" (*Monk's Tale*), Chaucer meant Olivier de Mauni, whose name he simply translated. I have quoted the example of Christine de Pisan in my *Piers Plowman*. Another example is Gower, who wrote:

Primos sume pedes Godefredi desque Johanni,
Principiumque sui Wallia jungat eis
Ter caput amittens det cetera membra.

— *Vox Clamantis*, Prol. to Book I.

Langland seems to have considered that some inconvenience might result from his having said so much, and he suppressed in text C, as said above, his veiled confidence.

quoted verse, occur the words in fifteenth-century handwriting: "Nota the name of thauct[our]." ¹ The carefully written MS Additional 35,287, which has been revised by a contemporary corrector, supplies very important evidence. The rule followed in it is that Latin words or names of real personages are written in large letters and underlined in red, and the names of imaginary beings are not distinguished in any way from the rest of the text. Thus the names of Meed, Holy Church, Robert the Robber, etc., are written like any other word. But the names of Samson, Samuel, Seneca, Kings Edmund and Edward are underlined in red. The name of "Longe Wille" is underlined in red and written in larger letters than the rest of the line, thus taking rank in those of real and not of imaginary beings.

Various notes and more or less detailed statements inscribed on several MSS are to the same effect. In the MS Ashburnham CXXX appear, inside the cover, in a handwriting of the fifteenth century, the words, "Robert or William Langland made pers ploughman."² In the Dublin MS occurs the well-known statement, also written in the fifteenth century: "Memorandum quod Stacy de Rokayle, pater Willielmi de Langlond . . . qui prædictus Willielmus fecit librum qui vocatur Perys Ploughman." John Bale, later, who took so much trouble, in the course of his "laboryouse journeys," to gather all available information concerning old English writers, inserted in his *Catalogue* a somewhat detailed notice which, if it contains some doubtful assertions (he himself states that several points are indeed doubtful), is certainly the result of personal investigations. He asserts once more that *Piers Plowman* is the work of one poet, called "Langland." Not content with printing his statement in his Latin *Catalogue*, he repeated it, in an abbreviated form, on the cover of one of the MSS he handled, namely the before-quoted Ashburnham MS CXXX of the B text: "Robertus Langlande, natus in comitatu Salopie in villa Mortimeris Clybery in the Clayland and within viij miles of Malvern hills, scripsit piers ploughman."³

¹ Fol. 64a.

² Skeat, B, Preface, p. xxii (E. E. T. S.).

³ Skeat, A, Preface, p. xxxv (E. E. T. S.).

Unity of the work, condition of the MSS, allusions in the text or out of it, marginal notes, tradition concerning both work and author agree well together. From the first, the poem has been held to consist of a succession of visions forming one single poem, as the *Canterbury Tales*, composed of a succession of tales, are only one work; and to have been written by one single author, called William or Robert (in fact certainly William) Langland. An attempt has recently been made to upset all that has been accepted thereon up to now.

II

During the last few years, Professor Manly has devoted his time and thoughts to *Piers Plowman*, not without notable effect. In two essays of great value he has made known the result of his studies and the inferences he thinks he can draw from what he has discovered.

His main and most interesting discovery, one which entitles him to the gratitude of every lover of mediaeval literature, consists in his having pointed out that a passage in the three versions had been misplaced in every MS and consequently in every edition, making complete nonsense where it was, while it would make sense elsewhere. Scribes, correctors, readers, editors, printers, and critics innumerable had seen the passage for five hundred years without noticing anything strange about it. Mr. Manly saw what nobody had seen, and the moment he spoke everybody agreed with him. Even if, in the end, the theories he thereupon put forth are not admitted, his merit will ever be that of the inventor; that of others, at best, the merit of the improver. There are several sorts of discoverers; Professor Manly belongs to the best and rarest, being one of those whose courtesy equals their learning and dialectical cleverness.

The discovery and theories of Professor Manly form the subject of two essays by him, one in *Modern Philology*, January, 1906, called "The Lost Leaf of Piers the Plowman," the other being the chapter on "Piers the Plowman and Its Sequence," in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. II, 1908.

Combining what he had discovered with the impressions derived

from a careful reading of the three texts in succession, he came to the conclusion that *Piers Plowman* "is really the work of five different men," to the critics' imagination being due "the creation of a mythical author of all these poems."¹

It may be, I think, in the interest of all to get rid at once of one of these five, and reduce the number to four. Even so reduced Professor Manly's theory, as will be seen, will prove hard enough to sustain. To admit John But to the honor of being one of the authors of the poem is indeed going too far. At the time when Richard II was "kyng of pis rewme," a copy of version A came to the hands of a silly scribbler who, as he says, "meddled of makyng." Finding the poem unfinished, and unaware of much more having been composed and made public since (for version B, at least, was then in existence), he added a senseless ending of his own, volunteering the information that Death had killed the author, now "closed under clom." He was so good as to give his name, so that we know for sure, on his own testimony, that "Johan But" was a fool.²

This spurious ending, preserved in only one MS and of which no trace is to be found in any of the continuations of the poem, no more entitles John But to the dignity of co-author, than do the lines added by scribes to make known their thirst, and their joy at having finished copying *Piers Plowman*:

Now of his litel book y have makyd an ende,
Goddis blessing mote he have þat drinke wil me sende.³

Let us therefore speak only of the four remaining authors, not an insignificant number, whose contribution to the total work is thus divided by Mr. Manly: Author I wrote passus I–VIII of A, containing the Meed and Piers Plowman episodes; Author II wrote the fragment on Dowel occurring in various MSS of A; to

¹ *Cambridge History*, II, p. 1.

² The passage on Death having killed the author seems to me, as to Professor Manly, to be the product of But's brain (so to speak). In his Oxford edition Mr. Skeat suppresses as spurious only the twelve last lines, from "And so bad Iohan But," etc., and in his E. E. T. S. edition he leaves a blank between these lines and the rest. As a matter of fact there is no blank in the MS, nor anything to distinguish these lines from what went before.

³ MS Douce 323 (A text).

Author III are due the emendations and additions in text B; to Author IV the emendations and additions in text C.

Before studying the reasons alleged in support of this thesis, it may be observed that, to carry conviction, they must be very strong, not only because, as pointed out above, the spirit pervading *Piers Plowman* is not to be found anywhere else, and if four poets instead of one were imbued with it (the four being besides of great merit), it is singular that they all chose to manifest it by anonymous additions to the work of someone else, the same work in each case; not only because all testimonies and notes in the MSS contradict this theory; not only because, if the shadowy character of one author unseen, unmet by any contemporary, is strange, the same happening for four people concerned with the same problems would be a wonder; but also because to suppose four authors adding new parts to a poem and freely remodeling the old ones, is to suppose also that, as soon as Author I had finished writing, he would have died to leave room for Author II who, in his turn, must have written and died; as must have done Author III to make room for Author IV. If Author I, II, or III had survived, they would have protested against the intrusion; or, at least, one or several among them would have written a continuation of his own (the ever-unfinished poem certainly wanted one), so that if he had been unable to prevent interpolations or spurious continuations, he would have given his actual views. But we have no trace of such a thing. There are many manuscripts, yet they give us only one text for each continuation. This is the more remarkable as, if we admit of Professor Manly's own strictures, the intrusion of each successive author must have been very galling to the previous ones. Mr. Manly brings forth a number of proofs demonstrating, as he considers, that the work was actually spoilt in many places by these subsequent contributors, that Author II tried to imitate the style of Author I but failed; that Author III misunderstood, in a number of passages, the meaning of his fore-runners, making nonsense of them all, and that Author IV did the same with Author III. No explanation is indeed possible, except that each of these authors must have written and breathed his last, with absolute punctuality, as moths lay their eggs, gasp,

and die.¹ A very strange, not to say improbable case. What are the proofs?

They are of three different sorts: (1) The shuffled leaf or misplaced passage; (2) Authors III and IV did not understand what their forerunners meant and must, therefore, be different people; (3) the differences of moods, feelings, ways of speaking, literary merit, meter, and dialect are such between the different parts or successive revisions, as to denote four different authors.

The main effort of Mr. Manly bearing on the demonstration that the author of version B cannot be the same as the author or authors of version A, and this discovery concerning the shifted passage being one of his most striking arguments, we shall consider this question first.

III

Having narrated, in the earliest version of the poem, the story of Meed, a story with no end to it, as is the case with all his stories, the author begins to tell his beads, and this, as a matter of course, he seems to imply, puts him to sleep:

And so I blaberde on my beodes: pat brouhte me a-sleepe.²

He has a new vision, as slightly connected as can be with the foregoing one. Conscience delivers a sermon and Repentance advises sinners to repent. "William" himself repents first, dropping "watur with his eȝen;" then "Pernel proud-herte" does the same. Beginning with Pernel, who represents Pride, we have then a confession of the Seven Deadly Sins, sometimes personified by real beings, sometimes remaining sheer abstractions. Some of the portraits are drawn with admirable care and vividness; others are mere sketches so perfunctory and inadequate as to seem rather memoranda to be developed later and put there simply for the name to appear in the list. "Leechour," for example, whose misdeeds the author at other places, in the same version, is not loath to describe in language no less crude than picturesque, gets

¹ It may also be observed that if it frequently occurs that an author leaves a work of his unfinished, the case is rarer with a continuator; it is usually in view of completing what is unfinished that a continuator sets to work. It took time and space for Jean de Meung to finish the *Roman de la Rose*, but he finished it.

² A, V, 8.

only five lines—a simple memorandum to be improved afterward; as was indeed indispensable, for not only are details lacking, but the few that are given are scarcely appropriate. There is no confession at all; Lechour asks mercy for his “misdeeds,” and promises that, for seven years, on Saturdays, he will have only one meal and will drink only water. If the privation he mentions is the only one he means to inflict on himself, it leaves him a margin for many sins, and especially his favorite one. Others, such as Envy (44 lines), Coveitise (39), and Gloton (76), are as full of life as the best passages in Chaucer himself.

Sloth, who comes last, has 14 lines, nearer the Lechour than the Gloton type; he is sorry for his nondescript “sunnes,” and promises that, for seven years, he will not fail to hear mass and matins on Sundays, and no “ale after mete” will keep him from church in the evening, which, if admissible, is not strikingly fitting. This said, a continuation follows, the inappropriateness of which, after so many centuries, Mr. Manly was the first to point out.

Immediately after Sloth’s solemn promise “to pe Rode,” which, in the usual course, should conclude his speech, come twenty-four utterly irrelevant lines: “And ȝit,” Sloth is supposed to continue saying:

And ȝit I-chulle ȝelden aȝeyn’ ȝif I so mucche have
Al þat I wickkedliche won’ seffe I wit hade, etc.¹

The passage deals with the moral obligation for robbers and dishonest people to make restitution. A real being—such as others in the course of these confessions, like “Pernel proud-herte,” or Gloton—Robert the Robber, is then introduced, weeping for his sins, wanting to make restitution, and in despair because he has not the wherewithal. These 24 verses are certainly out of place; some mistake of the scribe, to whom was due the original copy which all the others transcribed, must have caused the mischief, for all the MSS of A, without exception, offer this same unacceptable arrangement.

Here comes Mr. Manly’s important deduction: this same unacceptable arrangement *was* accepted by the author of version B.

¹ A, V, 236.

He had certainly before him, when he set to work, a copy of A; and while he introduced in it innumerable alterations and additions, he left this passage at the same wrong place. He could never have failed to notice the mistake if he had really been the author of A; as he did not, he was not.

And there is more than that. The very way in which he tried to get out of difficulty shows that he was not the same man. He noticed that there was something unsatisfactory about the passage: what has Sloth to do with restitution? He also noticed the singular fact that, for some unexplained reason, in this confession of the Seven Deadly Sins, only six appear, Wrath being forgotten. What he did, thereupon, betrayed as much as anything else, according to Professor Manly, the dualism of authorship:

The omission of Wrath and the confusion as to Sloth were noticed by B, and he treated them rather ingeniously. He introduced into the earlier part of Sloth's confession a declaration that he had been so slothful as to withhold the wages of his servants and to forget to return things he had borrowed. To supply a confession of Wrath, he himself wrote a *Confessio Irae*, totally different in style from the work of A, and, indeed, more appropriate for Envy than for Wrath, containing as it does no very distinctive traits of Wrath.¹

These assertions, which we shall take up one by one, are supplemented by an explanation of what, in the opinion of Professor Manly, must have taken place. According to him, the author of the first part of A, the best-gifted and cleverest of all, cannot have forgotten Wrath and must have devoted to it a leaf which was accidentally lost; the same author must have put the passage concerning Robert the Robber where it actually stands; but, between the beginning of this passage and the end of Sloth, must have occurred, on a leaf also lost, lines serving as a transition from Sloth to Robert, lines numerous enough "for the development of the confession of Robert . . . and also for the less abrupt ending of the confession of Sloth"²—an ending, it may be said, at once, not more abrupt than that of several of Sloth's fellow-sins. Very ingenious calculations, based on the average size of MSS and the number of lines in them, led Mr. Manly to the conclusion that those

¹ *Modern Philology*, Vol. III, p. 365.

² *Ibid.*, p. 362.

two passages would correspond, and that the disappearance of one sheet in a quire of the original MS, that is, of the two half-sheets on which the two passages must have been written, is the proper explanation for the two gaps said to exist in the text.

This explanation seems to me absolutely untenable, and I entirely agree with Mr. Bradley who has pointed out¹ that no conceivable lost passage with lines making a transition from Sloth to Robert the Robber could be at all satisfactory. Those two people cannot possibly be grouped together; the category to which Robert belongs is, without possible doubt, Coveitise, who like him is bound to make restitution, and the proper place for the misplaced 24 lines is after Coveitise: A, V, 145. Mr. Bradley adds that such a statement rather confirms than weakens Mr. Manly's theory as to the difference of authors; not only B did not notice that the 24 lines were at the wrong place, but he had not the slightest idea what the right one was.

All these observations can easily be answered.

The author of B, the same I think as the author of A, issued, after a dozen years or more, a new text of his poem, a text which he had had more or less constantly beside him, making changes, corrections, and additions as it occurred to him, the usual way with authors of works of this sort, capable of extension. The copy he used was naturally a copy of A as there was no other text then in existence, with the 24 lines certainly at the wrong place, since he left them there. His changes, which transformed a poem of 2,579 lines into one of 7,241, were very numerous; sometimes slight ones were made, sometimes new quotations were added, sometimes new matter was introduced on a considerable scale: the very way another writer, Montaigne, also absorbed in his thoughts, actually worked. Preceded by some lines on the necessity of giving back ill-gotten goods ("And ȝit I-chulle ȝelden aȝeyn," etc.), the passage on Robert the Robber, a logical sequence to Coveitise, forms a separate incident, not at all necessary to make the confession of the Deadly Sins complete; it has all the appearances of an afterthought; such afterthoughts as the author, or anyone in his place, would write on separate slips left loose or which might get

¹ *Athenaeum*, April 21, 1906.

loose, and which Adam Scrivener of sleepy pen would copy anywhere. And as Scrivener, in the present case, did not know what to do, he put the stray lines at the end of the passus when the rest of the confessions were finished, so Robert would come just before the "pousent of men" who mourned for their sins, "weopyng and weylyng."

For what concerns the author himself, maybe, while making so many changes in so many places, he never paid any attention to this passage (in which, as a matter of fact, he introduced no change at all¹); maybe also he thought of transferring it to its proper place and neglected to mark it accordingly or to see that the removal was made. The fact that the confession of Coveitise, as remodeled in version B, contains a passage, not in A, where restitution is insisted upon, at great length, in most pressing language, lends probability to this latter hypothesis. In version A the sins of this personage were told with some detail, but nothing except the vaguest allusion was made to necessary amends. In B, on the contrary, restitution is one of the points about which we hear most, the added passage being highly picturesque and in the author's best vein. Did you never make restitution? says Repentance—

"ȝus, ones I was herberwed," quod he, "with an hep of chapmen,
I roos whan thei were arest' and yrifled here males."

"That was no restitucioun," quod Repentance "but a robberes
thefte"

"I wende ryflynge were restitucioun," quod he "for I lerned nevere
rede on boke,

And can no Frenche in feith' but of the ferthest ende of Norfolke."²

The restitution here alluded to is precisely that which a penitent thief should make, the question being of stolen goods. Much more clearly than the lines added in Sloth (the bearing of which

¹ Two lines, 248, 249, of A are omitted in B, a mere scribe's oversight and one, as Skeat has noticed (not at all in view of the present discussion), particularly difficult to avoid in copying alliterative verses. (Preface of A, 1867, p. xvi.)

² B, V, 232; and further on, Repentance reverts to the same subject:

"Thow art an unkynde creature' I can the nouȝte assoile,
Til thow make restitucioun' and rekne with hem alle,
And sithen that resoun rolle it' in the regystre of hevene,
That thow hast made uche man good' I may the nouȝte assoile;
Non dimittitur peccatum, donec restituitur ablatum." —B, V, 276.

will presently be examined), this addition looks like a preparation for the appearance, shortly after, of Robert the Robber, who, too, should make restitution, but has "nouȝte wher-of."

That nevertheless, owing to the author's omission or the scrivener's "negligence and rape," as Chaucer would say, the Robert and Restitution passage was left, as before, at the wrong place, has nothing very prodigious or extraordinary. There is not even any need to suggest (though it may have been the case) that the poet happened to be of a conspicuously careless nature. The most careful people may be at times absent-minded. As I was talking recently about the *Piers Plowman* problem with a writer, who feels greatly interested in it (as well as in a few other questions), whose works have had a wide circulation and have been scrutinized by critics, not all of them over-friendly, he mentioned that something of the sort had happened to himself. Opening, thereupon, at p. 13, the *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, a work made up of several essays, written at different moments, with additions and afterthoughts noted on slips, he pointed out that two slips with the same statement had not only been allowed in by him, but the contents of the two were repeated in the same page, giving to the whole a, to say the least, somewhat ludicrous appearance:

The bobcats are very fond of prairie dogs, and haunt the dog towns as soon as spring comes and the inhabitants emerge from their hibernation. . . .

Bobcats are very fond of lurking round prairie-dog towns as soon as the prairie dogs come out in spring. . . .

Not only critics, friendly or otherwise, never noticed this strange occurrence, but the author himself read three proofs of the work, gave several editions of it, and has only just now had the mistake removed.

Stray sheets with corrections and afterthoughts on them are certainly difficult to handle and require a perseverance in attention which, without speaking of scribes, famous authors sometimes lack. To give only one more example, I may quote that of Cervantes who, as everyone knows, represents Sancho Panza quietly mounting his ass just after Gines de Passamonte had stolen it from him. The theft was an afterthought that Cervantes

forgot to make fit properly with the rest of his work. Having become aware of the mistake, he revised his text, but insufficiently, and left one or two passages in which Sancho is shown still riding the stolen animal. He made fun of it all later, in chaps. iii and iv of the second part of his immortal book; being no less merry about his mishap than the President of the United States about his own.

The same happened to Langland who, even supposing him to exhibit no conspicuous carelessness, was certainly not endowed with a strictly geometrical mind, and who, judging from results, continued to the last using slips, and loose sheets that were apt to go astray. Another proof, unnoticed till now, may be given from the C version. In this text the author has added, among other passages, some ten lines in the speech delivered by Piers Plowman before he makes his will:

Consaile nat the comune the Kyng to displease;¹

and do not, "my dere sone," hamper parliamentary, judicial, or municipal authorities in the fulfilling of their duties. These lines occur in C, after the text of parenthesis giving us the name of Piers's wife and children; they make no proper continuation, neither to this nor to what Piers was saying before, for he was saying that he would help all, except "Jack pe Jogelour" and "folke of that ordre." What "dere sone" is he now addressing? The passage thus inserted is so unsatisfactory that Mr. Skeat's marginal analysis ceases there,² as it is difficult indeed to make anything of it.

But the whole can easily be set right. In an earlier part of his same speech, Piers had been addressing especially the Knight, a good knight, full of the best will; he had recommended him to behave well, and to avoid dissolute people. To this advice in A and B, he added in C one line, as a link for his afterthought, viz., the line reading:

Contreplede nat conscience ne holy kirke ryghtes.³

Owing to a slip going wrong or to some such mishap, the ten lines

¹ C, IX, 35.

² C text (E. E. T. S.), p. 143.

³ C, IX, 53.

were not inserted here but elsewhere, making there perfect nonsense. Removed here, they fit in perfectly. Piers, continuing to address his "dere sone," says:

Consaile nat the comune the Kyng to displese,
Ne hem that han lawes to loke. . . .

Place these ten lines after the above, and all comes right: "Contreplede nat conscience consaile nat the comune," etc. When Piers has finished this review of a knight's duties (quite incomplete in the earlier versions), the old text is resumed and fits also perfectly, the Knight saying as before: "Ich assente by Seynt Gyle." Then comes also very appropriately Piers's declaration as to the disposition he has to make before his journey, and, as a last preparation, the drawing-up of his testament.

There can be no doubt that this arrangement is the right one and was intended by the author; no doubt either that this is one more case of an afterthought which the original copyist inserted at the wrong place, the author taking no notice; and as there was no further revision the mistake was never corrected.

With version B and the misplaced Robert and Restitution passage, the case was different; if Langland failed then to have the error corrected it was not so when, for the last time, he revised his whole work. To all appearances the revision was carried on in the same way as before, with a B text before him, erasures, corrections, and additions being made in the text, on the margins, or on slips. One of the author's most important corrections is (and this had been noticed before by critics) the new place in the text allotted by him to this same Robert and Restitution incident. That place is certainly the right one, the one Mr. Bradley suggests, and which the whole bearing of the passus imperiously commands. It comes after the confession and repentance of Coveitise.

One particular which has not been noticed deserves, however, special attention. The twenty-four lines consist, as we know, of six verses on the necessity of making restitution, followed by what concerns Robert the Robber; the six lines cannot be properly attached, such as they are, to any part of the poem, neither where they stand in A and B, nor where the confession of Coveitise

ends, which is their real place. Professor Manly supposes, as we have seen, a big gap supplying room enough for a transition from Sloth to Robert and Restitution. C, who being, as I think, the author, knew better, not only transferred the passage to the end of the confession of Coveitise, but supplied what was lacking to make it fit. What was lacking was not eighty lines as Mr. Manly would have us believe, but *one*.

Now, let anybody who has not the poem at his finger's ends try to imagine what single verse can make sense of that nonsense: we have our twenty-four lines, beginning, in the two texts where they are misplaced, with:

And ȝit I-chulle ȝelden aȝeyn· ȝif I so moche have,¹

and continuing with the passage telling us of Robert who "on *Reddite* he looked," and unable to repay, wept full sore. What is that *Reddite* he looked upon, and how can the passage be made to form a complete and satisfactory whole? No such personage as *Reddite* has been mentioned. There is not even any mention of some scroll with that word on it. I submit that only the author who knew from the first what he meant, could supply the single necessary verse. Let anyone who thinks he has a chance, try his skill.

Here is, in the meantime, what Langland did. The single line he added makes it clear that his intention had been, not to introduce one real man (Robert), but two real men; the restored passage reads:

Then was ther a Walishman· was wonderliche sory,
He highte ȝyvan ȝeld aȝeyn·² ȝf ich so moche have,
Al that ich wickeddelich wan· sytthen ich wit hadde,
And ȝauh my liflode lacke· leten ich nelle,
ȝat ech man shal have hus· er ich hennes wende . . .³
Robert ȝe ryfeler· on *reddite* lokede
And for ȝer was nat wher-with· he wepte ful sore.

—C, VII, 309.

¹ A, V, 236; B, V, 463.

² The scribe who first placed this same passage — minus the torn-off or somehow left-off first line — at the end of the passus in A, considered that he supplied a sufficient connection by simply changing, "He highte ȝyvan ȝeld aȝeyn," which, taken apart, made such nonsense as to strike even a scribe, into, "And ȝit I-chulle ȝelden aȝeyn."

³ Mr. Skeat considers these and the following lines, six in all, as forming the name of the Welshman, a suggestion he offers somewhat dubiously, as he abstained in both his

Now we know, and it is not the least significant result of the introduction of this one line previously dropped by a careless copyist, now we know what was meant by Robert the Robber "on *Reddite* he looked;" he has at present someone to look upon, namely his fellow-thief turned penitent: Evan Yield-Again, otherwise Evan *Reddite*, both words being a translation one of the other. Mind, writes Dr. Furnivall, to whom I had submitted this argument, that Yield-Again is a man and *Reddite* a mere word. I mind very well, and draw from it one more argument that we have to do with a single author. For this is not an isolated case of a Latin word being transformed by Langland into a personage having its own part to play, and bearing an English name which is a mere translation of the Latin word. In passus VIII of A (B, VII, 110), at one of the most solemn moments in the whole poem, Piers unfolds his bull in which is written: "*Qui bona egerunt ibunt ad vitam æternam.*" *Qui Bona egerunt* becomes at once Dowel, a separate personage who may help men or not, according to their merits, and the search for whom becomes the subject of the following passus. In the same connection may be quoted another example from a previous passus. In A, II, we hear that "Favel with feir speche" has brought together Fals and Meed. Some lines further on, "Feir speche" has become a steed which Favel rides to go to Westminster, and which is "ful feyntly a-tyred."¹

But why, one may say, select, of all people, poor Evan as a typical thief, willing, it is true, to make restitution, but a thief none the less, and why produce him as a parallel to "Robert the

editions from hyphenating, as he does usually in such cases, the whole succession of words said to compose the colossal name. The hypothesis is not an impossible one as Welsh people were famous for the length of their names and Langland was fond of inventing such appellations. It seems more probable, however—MSS giving of course no indication—that the name is simply Evan Yield-Again, and that the rest is the speech by which he, quite appropriately, shows that he is really "wonderliche sory." It frequently occurs with our poet that the transition from the indirect to the direct speech is very abrupt, and it is not always easy to be quite sure where the talking begins. See, for example, the passage B, II, 146, where the author tells us of Favel distributing money to secure false-witnesses; it ends by a line which we must suppose to be pronounced by Favel himself. The money is given, we are told, to secure the good will of notaries,

And feffe False-witnes' with floreines ynowe;
"For he may Mede amaistrye" and maken at my wille."

Cf. C, III, 158, where Skeat hypothetically attributes a longer speech to Favel.

¹ A, II, 23, 140.

Robber," also a penitent thief, but a thief? With Robert the case is clear; the association of the two words, as Mr. Skeat, in his invaluable treasure of *Notes*, has well shown, was traditional: "Per *Robert, robber* designatur."¹ But what of Evan, "the Walish-man"?

The name and the man fit the passage one as well as the other. Welshmen were proverbially taunted by their English neighbors with an inclination to thievery (and they, in true neighborly fashion, reciprocated the compliment). Their own compatriot, Giraldus Cambrensis, praises, in his *Description of Wales*, their quick intelligence, sobriety, hospitality, love of their country, but he has a chapter "Quod rapto vivunt," in the first phrase of which he explains that it is not for them a mere question of plundering their neighbors, but that they act likewise "among themselves."² The Parliamentary petitions show, on the other hand, that the complaints were ceaseless against Welshmen for their plunder and robberies; they "robbent et raunsenont et preignent bestes, biens et chateux;" the bordering shires are all spoilt and ruined ("degastez et destruz") owing to their misdeeds,³ and, what is well worthy of remark, those shires whose names and complaints constantly recur in the series of petitions are, to take an example of the year 1376, the year of text B, "Wyrcestre, Salop, Stafford, Hereford, Bristut et Glouc'."⁴ The first-named of these shires which want Welsh thieves to be punished and obliged to make restitution—for this too is mentioned in the petitions⁵—is Worcester, the very region where, on "Malverne hilles," it befell Langland "for to slepe for weyrynesse of wandryng." No wonder that the misdeeds of Evan the Welshman, and Robert

¹ Wright's *Political Songs*, p. 49, mentioned in Skeat's *Notes*, p. 125.

² "Ad hoc etiam rapinis insistere, raptoque vivere, furto et latrocinio, non solum ad exteros et hostiles populos, verum etiam inter se proprium habent."—*Descriptio Cambrie* . . . *Opera*, Brewer, Vol. VI, p. 207.

³ Ric. II, 1379-80, *Rolls of Parliament*. Such complaints are particularly numerous during the reign of Richard II.

⁴ 50 Ed. III, *Rolls*, Vol. II, 352.

⁵ In a petition of 2 H. IV, 1400-1, embodying wishes which certainly did not originate then, we find that, to the great detriment of the "countez ajoignantz à les marches de Galys," Welshmen—"les gentz du Galys"—continued to steal "chivalx, jumentz, boefs, vaches, berbitz, porks, et altres lour bienz." The interested parties ask that these "meffesours" be ordered to make restitution, "lour facent deliverer lour distressez biens et chateux issint prisez et arresteiz, saunz ascun dilaye."—*Rolls*, Vol. III, p. 474.

the Robber were linked together in his mind, and that he never had a good word for Welshmen.¹ Even this detail deserves to be noted, that in showing his two penitent thieves, the common robber who is willing to make restitution, but has not withal, and the other who is willing and able to a certain extent, the poet strictly adhered to realities. The Evanses of the border usually carried away sheep and cattle which they might have bodily restored in most cases if they had been truly "sory" for their misdeeds.

It will be admitted, I hope, that once more poem and real facts turn out to fit together quite well, and tally better with my plea than with Professor Manly's. Far from showing a diversity of authors, the study of the question of the shifted passage strongly confirms what other indications led us to believe, namely that the poet who wrote C must have written A also. Both, and consequently B, must be, so far as shown by the facts under consideration, the work of one and the same Langland.

IV

But with reference to the shifted passage, other points have been mentioned by Professor Manly, it will be remembered, as denoting a plurality of authorship. According to him the author of B, not knowing what he was about, tried, "rather ingeniously," to justify the presence of the Robert and Restitution passage after the confession of Sloth, and, in view of this, he introduced in the latter's speech a declaration that "he had been so slothful as to withhold the wages of his servants and to forget to return things he had borrowed."

The author of B, on the contrary, never dreamt, as I take it, of making any such attempt, and if he took any notice at all of the passage, it was to prepare its being removed to where it should appear, though he neglected to see that the change was effected. His additions in the confession of Sloth show, in any case, no intention to lead to the subject of Robert the Robber and of restitution.

¹ "Griffin the Walsche," in the three texts of the same passus where Yield-Again appears, is mentioned as one of the roisterous friends of Gloton (A, V, 167).

As Langland was, at various periods, revising his text, he now and then filled gaps, replaced perfunctory sketches by more finished portraits, and added, as in the case of Coveitise for example, some excellent details to pictures already very good. He did so as it occurred to him, without showing that thoroughness and regularity of design that would have been a matter of course with an independent reviser and continuator, and the *raison d'être* of his work. Anyone, I consider, assigning to himself the task of revising such a poem as the first version of *Piers Plowman*, would not have left Lechour with his five insignificant, not to say irrelevant, lines, which are even reduced to four in B. But an author caring so little for geometrical regularity as Langland did, could very well leave Lechour alone for the present, to remodel his portrait later, or not, as suited his fancy. So it is that only in C do we find a real confession of this sin, in twenty-six lines.

A striking proof of this ungeometrical disposition of mind in our author is supplied by the very question of the Deadly Sins, a disposition, not to say an infirmity, so peculiar as practically to corroborate our belief in the unity of authorship. Every critic has noticed that, in the series of sins depicted in A, passus V, Wrath is lacking. It has never been observed that in this vast poem dealing with the reformation of mankind, in which the Deadly Sins constantly recur to the author's mind, being specifically dealt with four times, out of those four lists only one is complete, as first given in any of the three versions. The order is never the same, which makes it easier for the writer to forget one or the other of the sins; on second thoughts he sometimes corrects his list, sometimes not. An independent reviser would scarcely have acted so.

In the "feffement" of Meed (A, II, 63), the Deadly Sins figure as Pride, Envy, Avarice, Gluttony, Lechery, Sloth—Wrath is lacking. In the corresponding passage of B and C the order is, as usual, modified: Lechery comes before Gluttony, but the absence of Wrath has been noticed, and we find now mentioned: "the erldome of envye and wratthe togideres."¹

¹ B, II, 83; C, III, 88.

Wrath was certainly absent from Langland's mind when he wrote this version A, as in his next enumeration there of the Sins, that is, in passus V, when they all confess and repent, Wrath is again forgotten. The order is not the same as before, being as follows: Pride, Lechery, Envy, Avarice, Gluttony, Sloth.¹ Having noticed the lack of Wrath in the previous passage, Langland, when he revised his text, added him here too, in B. This addition is naturally preserved in the C revision, but the order of the series is once more modified. In B the order was Pride, Lechery, Envy, Wrath, Avarice, Gluttony, Sloth; in C we have Pride, Envy, Wrath, Lechery, Avarice, Gluttony, Sloth.

Farther on, in the B text, the Seven Deadly Sins appear again as forming spots on the coat of "Haukyn the Actyf man." This is the only complete list, and is as follows: Pride, Wrath, Envy, Lechery, Avarice (alias Coveitise), Gluttony, Sloth.²

Farther on again, the sins are enumerated as constituting the main dangers threatening the wealthy, and the list is: Pride, Wrath, Gluttony, Sloth, Avarice, Lechery, Sloth again, total seven; but Sloth is named twice and Envy is lacking.³

In C, the Haukyn passage is fused with the confessions; but the list of the dangers is preserved. It is not left just as it was, for C notices that, in B, Sloth was named twice; he suppresses the word, therefore, on the least important of the two occasions, and so we have: "hus glotonye and grete synne" (C, XVII, 77), instead of: "his glotonie and his grete scleuthe" (B, XIV, 234). But, in spite of his desire, thus made evident, to revise and improve, the author of C, afflicted with the same infirmity of mind as the author of A and B, does not observe that Envy is lacking; he none the less gravely repeats twice that he is dealing with the "sevene synnes pat per ben" (XVII, 44), that he speaks "of the sevene synnes" (XVII, 61). As there was no further revision, this list remained definitively incomplete. Such peculiarities are indeed so peculiar as to be, in a way, the author's mark—his seal

¹ A, V, 45.

² B, XIII, 276.

³ B, XIV, 215.

and signature.¹ It is most unlikely that any reviser would have failed to "find the concord of this discord."

Concerning the additions to Sloth, in version B, it is easy to show that, like those introduced, at the same time, by the author in the confession of several other sins, they have no object but to bring his description nearer to the generally accepted type. For what regards Sloth, commonly held to be the source and cause of so many other faults, the poet examines the whole life of the slothful man, mainly, in his eyes, the man who *neglects* his duties. This was not at all a strange or original notion, but a commonplace one in those days. The pleasure such a man takes in finding "an hare in a felde" does not, to be sure, correspond exactly to our idea of slothfulness, but it corresponds to Langland's, who shows his sinner neglecting, meanwhile, to make himself proficient in church Latin. Sloth also neglects to come to mass in time, to fulfil his vows, to perform his penances, to keep his own house well, to pay his servants, workmen, and creditors their due, to thank those who have been kind to him. He wastes quantities of "flesche and fische," cheese, ale, etc. His life has ever been one of neglect:

I ran aboute in ȝouthere and ȝaf me nouȝte to lerne.

There is no intimation that any of his misdeeds was committed with the intention of *winning* money; it was with him mere negligence; if the author of B had really introduced any of these additions in order to make the confession fit with the restitution passage, he would have expressed himself otherwise, or would have chosen another alliterating letter and another word than *wan* in the line:

¹ The following table shows the number and order of the Sins as given in the earliest version where they appear.

A, II	A, V	B, XIII	B, XIV	C, XVII
Pride Envy Avarice Gluttony Lechery Sloth	Pride Lechery Envy Avarice Gluttony Sloth	Pride Wrath Envy Lechery Avarice Gluttony Sloth	Pride Wrath Gluttony Sloth Avarice Lechery Sloth again	Pride Wrath Gluttony Avarice Lechery Sloth
Wrath is lacking	Wrath is lacking		Envy is lacking	Envy is lacking

And ȝete wil I ȝelde aȝein' if I so moche have,
Al fat I wikkedly wan.¹

In truth, as I said, Langland had no other intent, in remodeling this passage, than to bring his picture near to the accepted type, and so he did. We may see in Chaucer what was the importance of that sin so summarily dispatched, at first, in the Visions, and how it led people to the *neglect* of all their duties, the temporal ones as well as the spiritual:

Necligence is the norice [of all harme] . . . This foule sinne Accidie is eek ful greet enemy to the lyfode of the body; for it ne hath no purveaunce agayn temporel necessitee; for it forsleweth and forsluggeth, and destroyeth alle goodes temporeles by recchelesnesse . . . Of [lachesse] comth poverte and destruccioun, bothe of spirituel and temporel thinges.²

In similar fashion the confession of Sloth, as it reads in text B of *Piers Plowman*, ends by an allusion to the state of beggary to which he has been reduced by his "foule sleuthe." Not a word in these additions implies that the author really considered that the Robert and Restitution passage should come next and that he ought to insert details leading up to it.

Dwelling on Wrath, forgotten in version A, and added in version B, Professor Manly thinks he detects a proof of a difference of authorship in the differences of merit and of style. The Wrath confession in B is, according to him, "totally different in style from the work of A, and indeed more appropriate for Envy than for Wrath, containing as it does no very distinctive traits of Wrath. The additions . . . are confused, vague, and entirely lacking in the finer qualities of imagination, organization, and diction shown in all A's work. In A, each confession is sketched with inimitable vividness and brevity."³

The answer is: (1) An author is not bound, under pain of being cleft in twain, always to show the same merits, in every respect, on every occasion, at all times; (2) the confessions in A are not so good, and the additions in B are not so bad as Professor Manly makes them out. As a matter of fact, some of these additions are

¹ B, V, 463.

² *Parson's Tale—De Accidia*, §§ 53 ff.

³ *Modern Philology*, Vol. III, p. 365; *Cambridge History*, II, p. 15.

excellent, and more than one of the cleverest and most humorous touches in the whole poem are to be found in them;¹ others are not so happy. The same may be said of the confessions as first drafted in A, some of which are excellent, and others far from good.

Thus it is that, in version A, supposed to be so perfect, Pride, represented by Pernel Proud-herte, concludes her speech by a promise to

merci be-seche
Of al that ichave i-had· envye in myn herte.²

As Mr. Manly said of the Wrath portrait in B, this is "indeed more appropriate for Envy" than for Pride, and this similarity in aptitude for confusion, if it has any bearing at all on the problem, can but confirm our belief in a unity of authorship. The same repenting Pernel undertakes, in version A, to reform: she will wear a hair smock,

Forte fayten hire flesch· that frele was to synne.

This kind of penance and this allusion to flesh "frail to sin" would certainly fit another Sin better than Pride, as shown by the author of A himself who, in passus III, had had the words "heo is frele of hire flesch" applied to Meed in the same speech where she is described as being "as comuyn as pe cart-wei."³ In this same A text, described as so far above the additions in B, repenting Lechour declares that his penance will consist in eating and drinking less than before on Saturdays; which is, if one may be permitted to say so, to "take it easy." While Professor Manly alleges that the attributes of Wrath in text B would better suit Envy, it turns out that in A, inversely, one of the classical

¹ Important additions were introduced in the confession of Coveitise. Repentance obliges the sinner to examine his conscience (a passage has been quoted above, p. 18), and tell of his various misdeeds among chapmen, lords, Lombards, etc. Repentance goes on saying:

"Hastow pite on pore men· þat mote nedes borwe?"

"I have as moche pite of pore men· as pedlere hath of cattes,

Þat wolde kille hem, yf he cacche hem myȝte· for coveitise of here skynnes."

—B, V, 257.

All the passage is as vivid, sharp, and pregnant as any anywhere in version A.

² A, V, 52.

³ A, III, 117, 127.

attributes of Wrath, the sowing of feuds and quarrels, is bestowed on Envy, who says of his neighbor:

Bitwene him and his meyne· ichave i-mad wraththe,
Bothe his lyf and his leome· was lost thorw my tonge.¹

If this sort of confusion between Wrath and Envy proved anything, it would again prove unity of authorship, as we find it in both A and B. It proves nothing in reality, except that Langland was of his time, and that he was of it as well when he wrote B as when he wrote A. In all mediaeval accounts of the Deadly Sins, the descriptions constantly overlap each other, one of the most remarkable cases being precisely that of Wrath and Envy; the one was held to be the source of the other: "Envye," says Wyclif, "is modir of ire."² "After Envye," says Chaucer's Parson, "wol I descryven the sinne of Ire. For soothly, who-so hath envye upon his neighebor, anon he wole comunly finde him a matere of wratthe, in worde or in dede, agayns him to whom he hath envye." So begins Chaucer's chapter on Wrath in the *Parson's Tale*. Well might Langland include Wrath and Envy in a single "erledome," when revising his first text.

In that description of Wrath so unsatisfactory to Professor Manly, and added to text B, this sin is shown "with two whyte eyen, and nyvelyng (sniveling) with the nose." He goes about sowing discord, making friars and members of the secular clergy hate each other, scattering scandal and jangles in convents (not an insignificant sin this one, according to our author, who had said before, in version A, "Japers and jangelers, Judas children"), behaving so that people meant to live in peace,

Hadde þei had knyves, bi Cryst her eyther had killed other.³

All this is considered by Professor Manly so preposterous that the author of A could never have written anything like it; if the author of B did, he must have been a different man. But, as we have just seen, the author of A was not at all incapable of admit-

¹ A, V, 80. Cf. Chaucer, who, however, is careful to place his statement under *Ire*: "For soothly, almost al the harm that any man dooth to his neighebores comth of wratthe." — *Parson's Tale*, § 34.

² *On the Seven Deadly Sins*, chap. xii.

³ B, V, 165.

ting irrelevant matter into his text, and on the other hand, there was nothing preposterous in these additions; they were, on the contrary, commonplace; such characteristics are paid full attention to by Chaucer's Parson: "Now comth the sinne of hem that sowen or maken discord amonges folk, which is a sinne that Crist hateth outrely." Jangling is another characteristic of Wrath: "Now comth Jangling . . . [and] comth the sinne of Japeres . . . The vileyns wordes and knakkes of Japeris [conforten] hem that travaillen in the service of the devel."¹

This same chapter on Ire well shows how vague were the limits assigned then to each sin. Following accepted manuals, and not considering there was any reason for him to make changes, Chaucer speaks, as coming under the scope of Ire, of those who "treden unreverently the sacrement of the auter," of swearing, of the various sinful ways of bringing about miscarriages, of "aduracioun, conjuracion," charms and the like, of "Flateringe" unexpectedly associated with Wrath: "I rekene flaterye in the vyces of Ire, for ofte tyme, if o man be wrooth with another, thanne wol he flatere som wight to sustene him in his querele." Here is a good occasion for anyone who remembers in what style the rest of the *Canterbury Tales* were written to show that England rejoiced not only in several Langlands but in a large number of Chaucers.

V

Other arguments yet have been put forth in order to show that the author of version B could not have been the author of version A; very telling ones if they held good. Remodeling version A, the author of B is said to have misunderstood or spoilt several passages in it, and he cannot therefore have originally composed that version. The following examples are given, being doubtless the best available ones.²

—"In II, 21 ff. Lewte is introduced as the leman of lady Holy Church and spoken of as feminine." Allusion is here made by

¹ *Sequitur de Ira*, §§ 45, 47.

² *Cambridge History*, II, p. 32.

Professor Manly to the lines in B where the handsome lady "purfiled with pelure" tells the dreamer that Meed has

. . . . ylakked my lemman pat lewte is hoten
And bilowen hire to lordes pat lawes han to kepe.

The answer is: (1) There cannot be any question here of B having misunderstood A, as the passage is quite different in both texts, and there is no mention at all of Lewte in A. (2) "Lemman" does not necessarily mean a man and a paramour; to use it otherwise is not to commit any error; a leman is a tenderly loved being of any sex: Spenser's Proteus asks Florimel "to be his leman and his ladie trew." If Florimel could play the part of a leman, why not Lewte? And, as the pelure purfiled lady in the Visions was Holy Church, we may take it for granted that a difference of sex had little to do in her choice of a "lemman." (3) Very possibly there may be nothing more in the passage than a scribe's error, "hire" being put in instead of "hym;" the more probable as the correction is made in C:

And lackyd hym to lordes that lawes han to kepe.¹

Of B having failed to understand or of having committed any error, there is no trace.

—"In II, 25, False instead of Wrong is father of Meed, but is made to marry her later." It is a fact that we have in A, "Wrong was hir syre," and in B, "Fals was hire fader," also that in B, as in all the other versions, Meed none the less marries Fals.

Without any doubt, when writing B, the author decided to modify entirely the family connections of Meed, and not without good cause. In the first version, so highly praised, the incoherency was such as to make a change indispensable. Wrong was very badly chosen as a father for Meed, and was given, besides, nothing to do. The marriage was not arranged by him; the marriage portion was not supplied by him; in the journey to Westminster he was forgotten; his part was limited to signing first among many others, the "feffment" charter supplied by other people. And while he did nothing in this important occurrence when, as

¹ C, III, 21.

a father, he should have been most busy, he suddenly reappeared in the next passus (as a murderer and a thief); he was then full of activity. Together with Peace, Wit, Wisdom, etc., Meed took part in the scene, but her blood-relationship with Wrong had been entirely forgotten and not a word was said implying any connection between the two: incoherency was there absolute. Wrong, moreover, was too thoroughly an objectionable father for Meed. From Wrong nothing but wrong can come; and yet, in this same text A, no less a personage than Theology assures us that Meed is not so bad after all. She is of gentle blood, "a mayden ful gent; heo mihte cusse pe Kyng for cosyn" How so, if the daughter of Wrong? In the same version, on the other hand, Favel does everything, and acts as the real father; it is he who assumes the responsibility and the charges of the marriage; he who supplies money to secure false witnesses at Westminster, who rejoices with Fals at the prospective success of the lawsuit. It is between him and Fals—Wrong being forgotten—that Meed rides to London.

The obvious thing to do in case of a revision was to suppress Wrong in the marriage preliminaries, and give Meed a less opprobrious parentage. Favel, not so repulsive as Wrong, was a ready-found father, the part of whom he had in fact already been playing. Such are precisely the changes adopted by Langland when re-writing his poem. That Fals instead of Favel appears in the half-line quoted above, owing to an obvious mistake as Meed marries Fals immediately after, is of no importance. Such slips of the pen would be difficult for any copyist, and even for any author, to avoid, in such a passage as this, with so many lines alliterating in *f*, and Favel fair speech, and Fals fickle tongue, constantly succeeding one another.

This is not a mere surmise, put forth for the sake of argument; it is a demonstrable fact. The same confusion between these two names, the same use of the one instead of the other, do not occur only in text B, but also in text C, and also in text A itself: one more kind of mistake which, if it demonstrates anything, can only show a similitude of authorship. In version A, II, the feoffment is said, on l. 58, to be made by Fals, and three lines farther on by Favel; Fals is a mistake for Favel. In version C, we are told,

in passus III, l. 25, that "Favel was hure fader," and on l. 121, that "Fals were hure fader."

The intention to make it Favel throughout, in B as well as C, is, however, certain: Fals in these texts continues to be the prospective husband and therefore cannot be the father; Wrong is no longer mentioned in either, so that there is only left Favel, correctly mentioned as such in C, III, 25. The same intention to give Meed a different parentage, better justifying Theology's otherwise ludicrous remarks, is also shown by Langland adding in B a mention that Meed had "Amendes" for her mother, a virtuous character, and the point is further insisted on in C: Meed's marriage cannot be valid without her mother's consent—

Amendes was hure moder by trewe mennes lokyng;
Without hure moder Amendes Mede may noght be wedded.¹

The author of B has certainly neither "misunderstood" nor spoilt A in this passage; just the reverse; he made sense of what was very near being nonsense.

—"In II, 74 ff., B does not understand that the feoffment covers precisely the provinces of the Seven Deadly Sins, and by elaborating the passage spoils the unity of intention."

That B, on the contrary, understood perfectly that the Seven Deadly Sins were in question is shown by the fact that he took notice of only six appearing in A at this place, and that he added the seventh. He gives some supplementary details on each of the sinful "erledomes" or "lordships" bestowed on the couple, the "chastlets" and "countes" these territories include. The unity of intention is in no way impaired.

—"In II, 176, B has forgotten that the bishops are to accompany Meed to Westminster and represents them as borne 'abrode in visytynge.'"

The answer is (1) B had no chance to *forget* any such thing, as he was, without any doubt, working with a text of A at his elbow. When he wrote his l. 176, he had before him l. 151 in A. (2) Contrary to what Professor Manly suggests, there is here no incoherency chargeable to B. In A, exactly as in

¹C, III, 122.

B, Langland indulges in an incidental fling at bishops; no more in one case than in the other were they to go to Westminster at all. In A, Civil gives advice how each steed should be "dight;" deans and subdeans will be used "as desterers,"

For thei schullen beren bisschops and bringen hem to reste;

which may mean anything one pleases, except the implying of a tumultuous journey to Westminster or anywhere else. Of Westminster not a word; and when, in version A, we reach that place with Fals and his crew, nothing is said of any bishop being part of the troop. In B, we have the same speech of Civil, with a few more details: deans and subdeans will be saddled with silver,

To bere bischopes aboute abrode in visytynge.

As this fling at bishops had, in both texts, nothing to do with the story, the author, revising his poem for the last time, suppressed it entirely in text C, a not isolated example of good taste given then by him.

—"Worst of all, perhaps, B did not notice" the shifted passage on Robert and Restitution, and the introduction into the text of the names of the wife and children of Piers, at a place (A, VII, 71-74) where they interrupt Piers's speech before his journey.

This has been answered before.

VI

Professor Manly, it will be remembered, holds that the Visions were written by five different men; version A being the work of three, versions B and C of one each. We have discussed his theories concerning John But and the author of B, this last being the one about whom he took most pains. Besides the arguments enumerated above, he put forth some more concerning this same version; but as they apply also to the differences of authorship said to be discernible in the rest of the work, all these can be discussed together.

These arguments are drawn from differences in literary merit, in opinions, meter, and dialect noticeable in the successive versions of *Piers Plowman*. Those differences are, according to

Mr. Manly, so considerable that it is impossible to explain them "as due to such changes as might occur in any man's mental qualities and views of life in the course of thirty or thirty-five years, the interval between the earliest and latest versions."¹ In other words, all successive versions of any given work, or any separate part therein, showing such differences as we find in *Piers Plowman*, are proved by experience to be due to different authors; therefore the two parts of A (we exclude John But and his few lines) and the versions B and C are, in spite of the indications to the contrary supplied by MSS, and of all corroborating evidence, the work of four separate authors.

It is easy to show that this is not, in any way, a telling argument. Not only have the differences between the various versions of our poem been, as I think, greatly exaggerated, but, taking them at Professor Manly's own estimation, they would prove, in themselves, nothing at all, for a large number of works of every date and from every country can be quoted offering even deeper differences, and differences often occurring in a much shorter space of time; and yet the whole is indisputably the work of one single author, who had simply changed his mind, or his manner, or both, or was better inspired at one time than at another.

The differences in meter and dialect need not detain us much. They are mentioned "pour mémoire," rather than discussed by Mr. Manly, and we must wait till the case is put forth with an attempt at demonstration. We do not think that, when it is, it will prove at all a difference of authorship. Concerning dialects, it is very difficult to distinguish, in cases like this, what is attributable to the author and what to the scribe. Mr. Manly tells us that a careful study of the MSS would show that, "between A, B, and C, there exist dialectal differences incompatible with the supposition of a single author. This can easily be tested in the case of the pronouns and the verb *are*" (p. 34). But we find as great differences between the various copies of the *same* version; and shall we have to believe that each copy was the work of a different poet? Take a pronoun, as Mr. Manly suggests; we shall find, for example, that in one MS of version C, the pronoun *she* appears

¹ *Cambridge History*, II, p. 4.

as *ʒo*, in another MS of the same version as *hue*, in another as *sche* and *scheo*.¹ Yet the first two MSS not only give the same version, but belong to the same subclass and are very closely connected; dialectal forms are none the less markedly different.² The excellent Vernon MS of A has southern forms which do not appear in other MSS of the same version. The MS 79 at Oriol College, containing text B, is pure Midland; the MS of the same text, Dd. 1. 17, at the University Library, Cambridge, offers northern forms.

Metrical differences tell even less, not only because, here again, scribes may have had something to do with them (we have, for example, a MS of A whose scribe was so fond of alliteration that he often modified the text to add, against all rule, a fourth alliterating word³), but because, if we admitted that changes of this sort proved differences of authorship, we would have to admit that two different Miltons wrote *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*,⁴ and that 37 different Shakespeares wrote Shakespeare's 37 plays. "Let us first take the point of metre," says Dr. Furnivall in his just-published *Life* of the great dramatist, "in which Shakspeare was changing almost play by play, during his whole life."⁵ Prof. Manly states that, between the two parts of A, admitted by all critics to have been written at some years' distance in time, there are notable differences "in regard to run-on lines and masculine endings."⁶ This would show that the *Tempest* cannot be from the same Shakespeare as *Love's Labour's Lost*, since there is one run-on line for every three in the first, and one for every eighteen in the second, and there are 1,028 riming lines in

¹ MSS Laud, 656, Bodleian; Philipps, 8, 231; University Library, Cambridge, Ff. 5. 35.

² A striking example of the close connection between these two MSS of the same version, and also of the persistence of scribes in adhering to their own private dialectal forms, is given by Skeat, Preface of C, p. xxix (Early Engl. Text Soc.): the scribe of the Philipps MS having written once by mistake *hue* instead of *he*, the scribe of the Laud MS "actually followed suit by substituting his favorite form *ʒo*, not noticing that *hue* was wrong."

³ MS of Lincoln's Inn, version A; Skeat, Preface of A, p. xxii.

⁴ "The difference in kind between the two poems is signalised in certain differences in the language and versification."—D. Masson, *Milton's Poetical Works*, Introduction to *Paradise Regained*.

⁵ Furnivall and Munro, *Shakespeare's Life and Work*, 1908, p. 66. Cf. pp. 90, 114, 137, 147, and the tables, p. 263.

⁶ *Cambridge History*, II, p. 18.

Love's Labour's Lost, and only two in the *Tempest* (and none in *Winter's Tale*).

Concerning differences of literary merit and mental power, Prof. Manly declares that the first part of A (episodes of Meed and Piers) is the best in the whole work; and not only the best, for after all it must happen to any author that one of his poems or cantos is his best, but so far above all the rest as to imply a difference of authorship. Those first eight passus are remarkable, he says, for their "clearness and definiteness and structural excellence;" they are conspicuous for their "unity of structure;" the writer never "forgets for a moment the relation of any incident to his whole plan. . . . Only once or twice does he interrupt his narrative to express his own views or feelings. . . . There is nowhere even the least hint of any personal animosity against any class of men as a class." The style is of unparalleled "picturesqueness and verve;" the art of composition is "one of the most striking features," of this portion of the poem.¹

In the latter part of A, on the contrary, that is the Dowel passus, and in the additions introduced into versions B and C, those qualities disappear to a large extent; we have much more "debate and disquisition" than "vitalised allegory" (why not?); the author is interested in casuistry, in theological problems, predestination, etc. (again, why not?); the "clearness of phrasing, the orderliness and consecutiveness of thought . . . are entirely lacking."² The author of B has the same defects to an even more marked degree; he is incapable of "consecutive thinking;" his "point of view is frequently and suddenly and unexpectedly shifted; topics alien to the main theme intrude because of the use of a suggestive word;"³ he, too, shows interest in predestination (which in any case brings him near one of the supposed authors of A); he cannot follow his plan properly.

As a matter of fact, there are no such wide differences. Great as are the merits of the first part of A, written with all the vigor and vivacity of younger manhood, they are mixed with the very kind of faults Mr. Manly detects in the second part and in the successive versions. Incoherencies are numerous and glaring; the

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 5, 11, 12.

² Pp. 17, 18.

³ P. 24.

aptitude to start off on a new track because a mere word has evoked a new thought in the writer's mind is remarkable, and in this we can find once more his seal and signature, the proof of his authorship. None of the stories lead to anything, to anywhere, nor are in any way concluded.

Let us glance, as we are bidden, at the first part of version A, beginning with passus I. The dreamer asks a "lovely ladi," who turns out to be Holy Church, to interpret the dream of the two castles and the field full of folk, which he has had in the prologue. The Lady answers in substance: The tower on this toft is the place of abode of Truth, or God the father; but do not get drunk. Why drunk, and why those details about drunkenness that has caused Lot's sins, the nature of which is recalled? The word *drink* having come under the pen of the author, he started off on this subject and made it the principal topic (eight lines) in Holy Church's answer, though it had nothing to do with the dream she had been requested to interpret.

The dreamer thanks her very much, and asks now what is this money that these men are treasuring up and "so fast holden." The Lady makes a somewhat rambling answer, both question and answer being equally unexpected and irrelevant. The "feld ful of folk" in the prologue had been represented as filled with men who ploughed the land, prayed, glosed on the gospel, overfed themselves, pleaded before the courts, traded, did, in fact, all sorts of things, except hold fast "moneye on pis molde."

What the Lady should have explained was not hard to make clear. The subject of the dream in the prologue was nothing else than what the author must have seen in reality a number of times, namely, the world as represented in a mystery play, just as we may see it pictured in the MS of the Valenciennes Passion:¹ on one side, God's Tower or Palace; on the opposite side, the devil's castle, "pat dungen . . . pat dredful is of siht," says Langland; between the two, a vast space for the various scenes in man's life or in the story of his salvation. It is simple, but the Lady loses her way, and the only people she describes are those that just happen not to have been there.

¹ Reproduced, e. g., in my *Shakespeare in France*, p. 63.

Asked by the dreamer, who has apparently ceased to care about the people in his dream, how he could be saved, the Lady advises him to think only of Truth; clerks "*scholde techen*" what Truth is. But this word *scholde* has caused the author's mind to wander, and instead of enlightening her hearer on his duties, the Lady begins to describe what other sorts of people "should" do, and especially a sort very far removed from the dreamer's condition, namely kings and knights; the Lady informs us that they "*scholde kepen hem bi Reson*." Kings in general remind her of King David in particular, and David and his knights remind her of Crist, who is the king of heaven, and of angels who are his knights; we have therefore something about angels, some of whom are good and others are bad, as witness Lucifer about whom we now get various details.

The poem continues as it began; the experience might be prolonged indefinitely. The dreamer insisting to know what is Truth, the Lady says that it consists in loving God more than oneself, but the word *love* having evoked a new train of thoughts, the poet descants now on the necessity of having "*reupe on pe pore*;" if you do not "*love pe pore*" you cannot be saved, even if you have been as chaste as a child; but the word *chaste* starting a new idea, the author branches off on this topic: to be chaste is not enough; "*moni chapeleyns ben chast*," yet lack charity, and so on.

None of the visions, episodes, or stories in these passus have any ending, nor are continued by what comes next. After the field full of folk, interpreted in the way we have seen by Holy Church, after the dreamer's appeal to know how he can be saved, we have the story of Meed and of her intended nuptials with Fals. A question of the dreamer how to know "the Fals," of which Fals not a word had been said before, is all there is of "structural excellence" in the connecting of the two episodes. Theology objects to Meed's marriage; the case is brought before the King who wants to give her hand to the Knight Conscience. Conscience refuses, makes a speech, and consents at last to kiss Meed, provided Reason agrees he should. Reason is brought forth, makes a speech on quite different topics, and we never hear any more of the kiss or the marriage. "*Dene Pees com to parlement*;" a new episode

begins, the word "pene" being all that connects it with the previous one. And so on, till the end.

Worthy of the profoundest admiration as Langland is, he deserves it for qualities quite different from that "structural excellence" which Professor Manly thinks he discovers in version A and in no other. In this version; in version B, and in version C—the same combination of qualities and defects denoting the same man—the poet's mind is frequently rambling and his poem recalls rather the mists on "Malverne hulles" than the straight lines of the gardens at Versailles.

Another difference mentioned by Professor Manly is that only "once or twice" the author of the first part of A interrupts his narrative to express his own views. Here again the difference with the other versions is remarkably exaggerated. We find in A, such passages as those beginning: "Bote god to alle good folk" III, 55;¹ "Bote Salamon þe Sage" III, 84 (the author interferes in these two cases to give the lie to his own personages); "I warne ȝou, alle werk-men" VII, 306; "ȝe Legistres and Lawyvers" VIII, 62; "For-thi I rede ȝow renkes (creatures) And nomeliche, ȝe Meires. . . ." VIII, 168. Here are, in any case, five examples instead of "one or two." The Langland who wrote A resembled too much, in reality, the Langland who wrote B and C to be able to resist the temptation to interfere, interrupt, and make direct appeals to his compatriots—to you mayors, you lords, you workmen—whom he wanted so much to convert. All these Langlands, so strangely similar, cared little for art, as compared with moral improvement.

We have been told also that there is nowhere in A "even the least hint of any personal animosity against any class of men as a

¹ The intervention of the author in this case interrupts the story of Meed who has just been heard by her confessor, and has been promised absolution if she gives a glass window to the church. The author expresses his personal indignation at such doings, and beseeches "you, lordynges," not to act thus; lords make him think of mayors, and the word mayor recalls to him the duties of such dignitaries; in his usual rambling fashion, the poet passes on accordingly to the duty for mayors to punish "on pillories" untrustworthy "Brewesters, Bakers, Bochers and Cookes;" and when we return at last to Meed, as the author had just been speaking of mayors, he makes her address "þe meir," though none had been mentioned, and there was none there before. Here again there is no cause for praising A's "structural excellence."

class." In this, too, I must confess I do not see great differences between any of the Visions; the same deep antipathies appear in A as elsewhere: scorn for idle people of whatever sort, strong animosity against lawyers carried to the point of absolute unfairness,¹ contempt for pardoners, pilgrims, and all those who think that, by performing rites, they can be saved, scorn and disgust for friars, who are constantly mentioned with contumely, and certainly not as individuals but as a class; the whole lot of them ("all þe foure ordres," the poet is careful to say) are, like the lawyers, condemned wholesale.²

If the merits of the first part of A have been, as I consider, exaggerated, so have the demerits of the second part and of the two revisions. The second part of A has, it is true, more dull places than the first: no author is constantly equal to his best work. But even in this portion of the poem, we find passages of admirable beauty, such as Langland alone produced in these days; the one, for example, where he tells us of his doubts, and of his anguish at his inability to reconcile the teachings of the Church with his idea of justice. Aristotle—"who wrouȝte betere?"—is held to be damned; and Mary Magdalen—"who miȝte do wers?"—as well as the penitent thief, with his whole life of sin behind him, are saved. Happy those who do not try to know so much, who do not feel those torments; happy the "pore peple, as plouȝmen" who can (and what a grand line!)—

Percen with a *pater-noster* the paleis of hevene.³

The value of the most picturesque and humorous scenes in the rest of the poem fades in comparison with passages of this

¹The author cannot admit that a lawyer's work deserves a salary as well as any other kind of work; he would like them to plead "for love of ur Lord," and not for "pons and poundes" (Prol. 85).

²

I font here Freres' all þe Foure Ordres,
Prechinge þe peple for profyt of heore wombes.

—A, Prol. 55.

Friars receive Fals; they open their house to Lye and keep "him as a Frere" (II, 206); Meed's confessor who is a model of low rascality is "i-copet as a Frere" (III, 36); Envy wears the "fore slevys" of "a Freris frokke" (V, 64, etc.). The fact that a copy of *Piers Plowman* belonged to a friars' convent has no bearing on the question; Wyclifite Bibles were also found in convents.

³A, end of passus X.

sort. Others, of a different stamp, might be quoted, such as the brief and striking portrait of Wit, the model man of learning:

He was long and lene to loken on ful symple,
Was no pride on his apparail ne no povert noþer,
Sad of his semblaunt and of softe speche.¹

What has been said of the differences between the two parts of A cannot but be emphatically repeated for what concerns those supposed to exist between A and B. Given the time elapsed, as shown by the political allusions, those differences, if any there be, are far from striking. A remarkable point deserves attention at the start. As acknowledged by Professor Manly himself, the author of B makes excellent, vivid, and picturesque additions to the first two episodes (stories of Meed and of Piers Plowman), and introduces abstract, discursive, and scarcely coherent ones in the Dowel part; in other words B is, from this point of view, an exact counterpart of A, the picture being simply drawn on a larger scale. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that men so similarly impressed and influenced by similar topics were not improbably the same man.

In reality, defects and qualities bring the three versions very near one another. Professor Manly tells us that the author of B is in "helpless subjection to the suggestions of the words he happens to use;" so is, as we have seen, the author of A. The author of B "loses sight of the plan of the work;" so does A. B, Mr. Manly continues, shows perhaps as much power as A in "visualising detail;" but he is "incapable of visualising a group or of keeping his view steady enough to imagine and depict a developing action."² One may be permitted to ask what is the crowd which B ought to have described, and which he failed to visualise? Of the perfection of his power of observation and the picturesqueness of his style some examples have been given; many others might be added; and the famous rat-parliament, one of the most characteristic and best "visualised" scenes in the poem, is present in everybody's memory.

As for his incapacity to understand the development of an action, B shows certainly, by the suppression of Wrong as father

¹ A, IX, 110.

² *Cambridge History*, p. 32.

of Meed, the giving of "Amendes" to her as a mother, and the other modifications in the passage, that he well understood how an action should develop. C shows it even better by the suppression of the lines telling, in previous versions, how Piers tore up his bull of pardon out of spite, and simply because contradiction had irritated him. This is one of the grandest, if not the grandest scene in the poem, the most memorable, even for us to-day, the culminating point of the work. "Pleyn pardoun" is granted to ploughmen and other poor people who have led hard lives on this earth without murmuring; it is the recompense of their humility; the Lord gives it to them "for love of heore lowe hertes."¹ Piers, can we see your pardon?

And Pers at his preyere the pardon unfoldeth,
 And I bi-hynden hem bothe bi-heold al the bulle.
 In two lines hit lay and not a lettre more,
 And was i-written riht thus in wisse of treuthe:
Et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam;
Qui vero mala, in ignem eternum.

It is only in revising his text for the last time that the author felt how greatly improved the whole episode would be if cut short here, that the action was now fully developed, and that any addition, and especially the tearing of the bull by Piers whose main treasure it should have been, simply spoilt it. He therefore suppressed this incident, twenty-six lines in all, and having briefly shown by the priest's remark that such a teaching was too high for vulgar ecclesiastics, he tells us he awoke as the sun was setting in the south, and he found himself

Meteles and moneyles on Malverne hulles.²

If the vague subject of Dowel, Dobet, Dobest, inspires the author of B and C with as much rambling as the author of the second part of A, it inspires him, too, with several of those splendid touches of eloquence and feeling which also shine in that same second part—and nowhere else in the literature of the day.

¹ A, VIII, 87 ff.

² C, X, 295.

There we find, for example, added in version B, the incomparable prayer to the Creator, in passus XIV:

Ac pore peple, thi prisoneres' lorde, in the put of myschief,
 Conforte tho creatures' that moche care suffren
 Thorw derth, thorw drouth' alle her dayes here,
 Wo in wynter tymes' for wantyng of clothes,
 And in somer tyme selde' soupen to the fulle;
 Conforte thi careful' Cryst, in thi ryche,
 For how thow confortest alle creatures' clerkes bereth witnesse,
*Convertimini ad me et salvi eritis.*¹

In version B also we find, for the first time, the great passus on "Crystes passioun and penaunce,"² with the author awakening at the end, to the sound of Easter bells, not saddened and anxious, as formerly while the sun was going down on Malvern hills, but cheered and joyful on the morning of the Resurrection. It is difficult to read such passages, so full of fervor, so sincere, and so eloquent, without thinking of Dante or Milton—unless one chooses to think of Langland alone.

VII

Studying text C apart from the others, Professor Manly points out certain traits special to it and marking it, he believes, as the work of a separate author. Two examples are quoted by him of "C's failure to understand B" (p. 33); other instances, we are told, might be given, but these are doubtless the most telling ones. The first example consists in a comparison of ll. 11–16 in the prologue of B with the similar expanded passage forming ll. 9–18 in C, passus I. Professor Manly considers the picture entirely spoilt. Be it so; the case, as we shall see, would be far from a unique one; more than one author spoilt, in his old age, the work of his youth. But it is not certain that it is so, and many, I think, would not willingly lose the new line added there to broaden the spectacle offered to the view of the dreamer who sees before him:

Al the welthe of this worlde' and the woo bothe.

The second example is the change introduced in ll. 160–66 of the Prologue in B (episode of the Rat Parliament). The "raton

¹ B, XIV, 174.

² B, XVIII; C, XXI.

of renon" suggests that a bell be hung to the neck of the cat: there are certain beings in "the cite of London," who bear bright collars and go as they please "bothe in wareine and in waste;" if there was a bell to their collar, men would know of their coming and run away in time. Clearly, according to Mr. Manly, those beings, those "segges," are dogs, and C made a grievous mistake in supposing them men; he cannot therefore be the author of B.

But in reality they *were* men. C made no mistake, and, on the contrary, improved the passage. The allusions were incoherent in B. What were those beings, living in London, roaming in warrens, and wearing collars, whom if a bell were added to their collars, *men* would be able to avoid?

Men myȝte wite where thei went and awei renne.

The author of C very justly felt that the passage should be made clearer; he had, of course, never intended really to mean dogs (from which people are not accustomed to run away) but men, those very "knyȝtes and squiers" whom he now names for our clearer understanding, and who had taken then to wearing costly gold collars—a well-known fashion of the period—being themselves the very sort of "segges" the poorer people might have reason to fear. He therefore names them and no one else, and is careful to suppress the allusion in B to their appearing so adorned "in wareine and in waste." There was no "misunderstanding" on the part of C; just the reverse; and he deserves thanks instead of blame.

Considering this version as a whole, Professor Manly describes the author as having been, so it seems to him, "a man of much learning, true piety, and of genuine interest in the welfare of the nation, but unimaginative, cautious, and a very pronounced pedant." This amounts to saying, as everybody will agree, that C is the work of an older man than A and B, which simply confirms the point of view I defend. Increasing piety, more care for politics, more cautiousness, less imagination, a greater show of learning (in the last edition he gave of his *Essays*, Montaigne added about two hundred Latin quotations¹) are so many characteristics of age, none of them implying a difference of authorship.

¹ P. Villey, *Les sources des Essais de Montaigne*, Paris, 1908, Vol. I, p. 402.

It is an untoward circumstance for Mr. Manly's theory that his successive writers seem to have been each one older than his predecessor, just as if the same man had been living to revise his own work.

Concerning the textual changes and additions in C, Mr. Manly declares that "they are numerous and small, and not in pursuance of any well-defined plan. There are multitudinous alterations of single words and phrases, sometimes to secure better alliteration, sometimes to get rid of an archaic word, sometimes to modify an opinion, but often for no discoverable reason, and occasionally resulting in positive injury to the style or the thought" (p. 30). Precisely; and this is what an author, in the evening of life, would do for his own work and what no one else would; a reviser would have undertaken the work for some cause and with "a well-defined plan." At times, says Professor Manly, "one is tempted to think that passages were rewritten for the mere sake of rewriting." Just so, and who, except the author himself, would take so much trouble? An absolutely parallel case is offered by no less a man than Ronsard, who revised his whole works and gave one last edition of them in 1584, the year before his death. The changes introduced by him are of such a nature that they can be described as follows: "There are multitudinous alterations of single words and phrases, sometimes to secure better [cadence], sometimes to get rid of an archaic word, sometimes to modify an opinion, but often for no discoverable reason, and occasionally resulting in positive injury to the style or the thought," this latter mishap being far more frequent with Ronsard than with Langland, and the friends of the French poet deploring, in his own day, his unfortunate changes.¹

Mr. Manly considers that the author of C shows not only more pedantry in increasing the number of quotations, but more learning: "C is a better scholar than either the continuator of A (who translated *non meceris* by 'slay not' and *tabescebam* by 'I said nothing') or B (who accepted without comment the former of these errors)." One might well answer that there is nothing extraordinary in a student knowing more in his later years than

¹ See, e. g., Pasquier, *Recherches de la France*, Book VI, chap. vii.

in his youth. But, in reality, scholarship is here out of the question, and the utmost that can be said, in view of the knowledge displayed everywhere else by the same writer, is that when he wrote *mecaberis* and *tabescebam*, the analogy of sounds evoked in his mind the thought of *mactabis* and *tacebam*. Revising his text he noticed one of these *misprints* and forgot the other; but he noticed that one too in his next edition and corrected it: exactly what could be expected from a poet, who draws, in version A, two lists of the Seven Sins, both wrong, and corrects them when writing B, adding, however, in this version another list of the Seven Sins, equally wrong. It cannot certainly be pretended that our author was a man of minute accuracy, for, as Mr. Skeat has observed, "he cites St. Matthew when he means St. Luke, and St. Gregory when he means St. Jerome,"¹ which is worse than to have left uncorrected, or even to have written, *tabescebam* instead of *tacebam* and *Fals* instead of *Favel*. If one of the versions had shown minute accuracy throughout, that would have told, in a way, for the theory of multiple authorship; but we find nothing of the kind, and the last list of the Seven Sins is left in C definitively wrong.

VIII

Such is, as I take it, the truth concerning the supposed differences between the three versions. But let us, as a counter experiment, admit that it is not so, and let us accept all those differences at Professor Manly's own estimation. In order that they prove anything, experience must have shown that whenever similar ones are detected in the various revisions or the various parts of a work, a multiple authorship is certain.

To say nothing of Chaucer and of his tales of the Clerk, the Miller, and the Parson, we would have, if this theory held good, to admit that the first three acts of *Hamlet* were written by one Shakespeare, and the two last by another—an obvious fact: note the differences of merit, so much genius and so little, the glaring discrepancies between the two parts, Hamlet slim and elegant, the "mould of fashion" in the first acts, fat and asthmatic in the

¹ Preface of B, p. xiv (E. E. T. S.).

last; remember our being told that Hamlet has "foregone all customs of exercise" since Laertes left, and later that, since Laertes went, he has been "in continual practice;" Laertes himself, a brave and honorable young man in the first acts, a cowardly murderer at the end, and so on. As Professor Manly says concerning the separate poet to whom he attributes the second part of A, the author of the latter part of the play "tried to imitate the previous writer, but succeeded only superficially, because he had not the requisite ability as a writer, and because he failed to understand what were the distinctive features in the method of his model."¹ It even seems, at times, as if the author of the two last acts had never read the three first: dual authorship should therefore be held as more than proved.

The whole story of literature will have to be rewritten: strong doubts will be entertained whether the revised version of the *Essays* of 1588 is really by Montaigne, the differences with the former ones offering some remarkable analogies with those pointed out in *Piers Plowman*.² There will be a question as to the first part of *Don Quixote* being by the same Cervantes as the last,³ and *Paradise Regained* by the same Milton as *Paradise Lost*. But this is nothing: here is a grand poem, of great originality, full of love and adventures, revealing withal the highest aims; a masterpiece received at once as such and ever since. And we have also a revision, the work obviously of a feeblor hand, of a less gifted genius, a cautious man, very pedantic. All that was best and most original in the first text has been suppressed or toned down; the subject is modern, yet we now find that the character of

¹ *Cambridge History*, p. 17.

² In the first edition of the *Essays* (to quote an opinion not at all expressed in view of the present discussion, as it dates from 1897) the thought of Montaigne "est hardie dans l'expression; elle a le ton haut et résolu de celui qui s'émancipe. Plus tard, au contraire, elle baisse la voix, comme on la baisse pour dire des choses graves dont on sait la portée." In his same last version, Montaigne "disjoint ses raisonnements, coupe le fil de ses deductions, en y intercalant des remarques étrangères; la pensée primitive se morcèle ainsi et se désagrège. . . . Son livre est devenu pour Montaigne une sorte de tapisserie de Pénélope, qu'il ne défait certes pas, car il retranche peu, mais dont il relâche les mailles, y travaillant toujours sans l'achever jamais."—Paul Bonnefon, in Julléville's *Histoire de la Littérature Française*, III, 451, 468.

³ "A certain undertone of melancholy has been perceived in his second part. . . . At whiles he moralise[s] with that touch of sadness natural to a man of many years and trials, for whom life is only a retrospect."—T. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, Introduction to his reprint of Shelton's translation of *Don Quixote*, London, 1896, Vol. III, p. xxiv.

the hero has been so remodeled as to recall Achilles; other personages are so modified as to resemble Hector, Nestor, Patrocles. Here are indeed differences! Yet we should be wrong in assuming that the *Gerusalemme Liberata* and the *Gerusalemme Conquistata* are the work of several Tassos.

Here is another work, and the analogy is even closer; it is an English masterpiece. It appeared in one volume, full of the most interesting and best "visualised" scenes, every incident so well presented and so true to life as to be unforgettable, the book attaining at once an immense popularity, being translated into every language, and keeping to this day its hold on readers throughout the world. We are confronted with two continuations. The earliest is a weak imitation of the first work, the visual power has diminished; strange happenings of the usual kind are expected to make up for the lack of better qualities; it is impossible to stop reading the first part when once begun, it is difficult to read the second to its end. In the next continuation, the differences are yet deeper, the author makes faint attempts to connect his work, by allusion, with the first one, but all has become vague and allegorical; theological mists have replaced tangible realities. Afraid apparently of detection, the author of this part goes so far as to pretend that the first one was "allegorical," though also "historical": a barefaced slander on the original work. The new part is full of rambling disquisitions on man and his duties, on atheism, and on Providence, with an imaginary journey to the world of spirits and a visit to Satan: "Here, I say, I found Satan, keeping his court or camp, we may call it which we please." The conclusion of the book is, that "a great superintendency of divine Providence in the minutest affairs of this world," and the "manifest existence of the invisible world" have been demonstrated. A difference of authorship is the more obvious that there was not between the publications of these three volumes, anonymous all of them, a lapse of years allowing the author to become, so to say, a different man: it did not take two years for the three to appear.

Yet, for all that, the three were the work of the same writer, and the titles he gave to them were: *Life and strange surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*—*Farther Adventures of Robin-*

son Crusoe—Serious Reflections . . . of Robinson Crusoe, with his Vision of the Angelick World. The first part appeared in 1719, the last in 1720. Shall we have to believe in three different Defoes?

IX

I mentioned at the outset that all the indications in the MSS, whether titles of the different parts, colophons, or notes added by former day owners, agreed in showing that we had to do with a single work, the work of a single author; none to the contrary being discernible. One more connecting link between the three versions remains to be noticed.

At various places in each, and with more abundance as time passed, the author gave some details about himself, his train of thoughts, and his manner of life. All these details are simple, plain, clear, most of them of no interest whatever, if untrue; they are not meant to show the poet to advantage, but have, on the contrary, often the tone of a confession: *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*. Localities are mentioned with a precision and definiteness unequalled in the ample dream-literature of that period, where poets usually go to sleep by the side of an anonymous brook, in a nameless country. Here two regions, one a very unusual one in poetry, are named so as to draw special attention, Malvern with her hills, her mists, and the vast plain at the foot of the slopes; London, with its cathedral of many chantries, its great people wearing bright collars, its poorer ones in their "cots," its principal thoroughfares and suburbs, Cornhill, Cheapside, Cock Lane, Garlickhithe, Tyburn, Southwark, Shoreditch, where lives "dame Emme," Westminster with the king's palace and the law courts. The allusions to Welshmen confirm the inference that Malvern is not a name chosen at random, as the author expresses such ideas as would occur to a man of the Welsh border. They are natural in such a one, and would be much less so in a Kentish or Middlesex man. There is in Chaucer one mention of Wales: it is to describe it as the refuge of Christians during the period of the old-time invasions:

To Walis fled the cristianitee.¹

¹ *Man of Law*, l. 446.

Gower mentions Wales, but only to say that it was the place from which came the bishop who baptized King Allee.¹

All those personal notes, scattered in versions belonging, as everybody acknowledges, to dates far apart, accord quite well one with another. If Mr. Manly's four anonymous authors are responsible for them, they showed remarkable cleverness in fusing into one their various personalities, to the extent even of growing more talkative, "cautious," and "pedantic," as years passed, so as to convey the impression of the same man growing older—the more meritorious, too, as the taking-up of somebody else's work to revise it, is rarely a task assumed at the end of one's life, so that the chances are that the supposed reviser of C was not an old man; yet he cleverly assumed Eld's habits and ways of speech.

Not only do the tone of the work and the nature of the additions denote that B was written by an older man than A, and C by an older man than B, but the fact is expressly stated in the course of the private confidences added in each version. At the beginning of passus XII in B, Ymagynatyf, besides telling us that the author has followed him "fyve and fourty wyntre" (which one is free to take literally or not), specifies that the poet is no longer young, and that he has reached middle age, though not yet old age. I have often moved thee to think of thy end, says Ymagynatyf,

And of thi wylde wantounesse· tho thou ȝonge were,
To amende it in thi myddel age· lest miȝte the faylled
In thyne olde elde.²

In C, written many years later, the "fyve and fourty wyntre," which could no longer be even approximately true, are replaced by the vague expression "more than fourty wynter," and in the long and very interesting passage, reading like a sort of memoirs, added at the beginning of passus VI, the author speaks of himself as "weak," and of his youth as being long passed:

"Whanne ich ȝong was," quath ich· "meny ȝer hennes . . ."³

¹ *Confessio Amantis*, II, l. 904.

² B, XII, 6. "Concupiscentia Carnis" had told him, it is true: "Thow art ȝonyge and ȝepe and hast ȝeres ynowe" (XI, 17). But this occurs in a passage where Fortune shows to the author, in a mirror called "myddlerd" (earth or the world), an allegory of man's whole life; it is therefore preserved in C. It may also be observed that it agrees with the character of "Concupiscentia Carnis" to speak thus to men of *any* age.

³ C, VI, 35.

How extraordinary is such minute care, in four different anonymous authors, who cannot have acted in concert, as each must have died to allow the other to do his revising unimpeded! such minute care, in order to give the impression of only one man revising his own work as he lived on, and grew older!—much less extraordinary, and therefore more probable, if the whole was, as I believe, the work of the same writer.

Not only do the personal intimations scattered in the three versions fit well together, but they fit such a man as would have composed such a poem, a man of enthusiasm and despondency, of a great tenderness of heart, in spite of a gaunt exterior and blunt speech, a man of many whims which he may occasionally have obeyed,¹ only to feel afterward the pangs of remorse, as if he had committed real crimes; describing himself then in the worst colors, and, what is well worthy of notice, giving throughout the impression of one who would attempt much in the way of learning without reaching complete proficiency in any branch, of one with an ungeometrical sort of mind, who could let many errors slip in the midst of his grand visions, pregnant sayings, vague dreams, and vain disquisitions. Nothing is more characteristic than the description of himself he attributes to Clergie in the very first version of the poem:

The were lef to lerne but loth for to stodie.²

In a line added in B, he makes Holy Church recall his lack of steady zeal:

To litel latyn thow lernedest lede, in thi ȝouth.³

He describes himself elsewhere as “frantyk of wittes.”

On this, Mr. Manly limits himself to stating briefly that all such details must be imaginary, and he refers us to Prof. Jack who “has conclusively proved” that all these indications were fictitious. “Were any confirmation of his results needed, it

¹ Coveytyse-of-eyes cam offer in mynde
Than Dowel or Dobet amonge my dedes alle.
Coveytyse-of-eyes comforted me ofte,
And seyde, “have no conscience how thow come to gode.”

—B, XI, 49.

² A, XII, 6.

³ B, I, 139; not in A; preserved in C.

might be found in the fact that the author gives the name of his wife and daughter as Kitte and Kalote . . . typical names of lewd women, and therefore not to be taken literally as the names of the author's wife and daughter" (p. 34).

But if those names had such a meaning that part of the poem would be unintelligible anyway, whoever the author be. Those names appear in the splendid passage where the poet is awakened by the bells on Easter morn:

And kallyd Kytte my wyf and Kalote my doughter,
 'A-rys, and go reverence godes resureccioun,
 And creop on kneos to the croys and cusse hit for a juwel
 For goddes blissed body it bar for owre bote.¹

To say that those names are the invention of a reviser is no explanation. Why should a reviser choose them, if they had such a meaning, and what can be his intention in showing himself, at this solemn moment, surrounded with such a disreputable family?

The truth is that the opprobrious meaning thus attributed to these names at that date is a mere assumption in support of which no proof is being adduced. Names for which such a bad fate is in store always begin by being honorable; then comes a period during which they are used in the two senses; then arrives the moment of their definitive doom. The parallel French word *catin*, derived like Kitte from Catherine, was for a long time a perfectly honorable word; the second period began for it at the Renaissance; but then, and for a great many years, it was used both ways. It appears with the meaning of a strumpet in Marot:

Une catin, sans frapper la porte,
 Des cordeliers jusqu'en la cour entra.²

But the same word is used to designate the Queen of France in one of the eclogues of Ronsard: *Catin* stands there for Catherine de Médicis.³ The same name again is employed much later by Madame Deshoulières as an honorable proper name, and by Madame de Sévigné as an infamous substantive.

¹ C, XXI, 473; B, XVIII, 426.

² Ed. Janet, Vol. III, p. 105; pointed out by Paul Meyer.

³ Eclog. I, first speech of the "Premier Pasteur Voyageur." Elizabeth of France, daughter of Catherine and of Henri II, is there described as "fille de Catin."

As for *Kalote*, supposing *callet* to be really derived from it, it should be noted that the oldest example quoted in Murray's Dictionary of *callet* being used to designate "a lewd woman, trull, strumpet, drab," is of about 1500.

Except for this, we are referred, as I have said, to Prof. Jack, stated to have "conclusively proved" that nothing was genuine in the personal allusions scattered throughout *Piers Plowman*. As a matter of fact, Prof. Jack did nothing of the kind. He assumes at the start, in his essay,¹ the thoroughly skeptical attitude which is nowadays all the fashion. James I of Scotland, we were recently told, did not write the *Kingis Quhair*; Sir Philip Sidney was never in love with anybody, and his poems are literary exercises; he himself says they were not, and even names with marked animosity the husband of the lady; but that does not matter; we are not such fools and we know better. Shakespeare's dark woman never existed at all; he invented her to have the pleasure of drawing her edifying portrait. As for *Piers Plowman*, the author lets us understand that he made the very sort of studies that one must have made to write such a poem; he tells us that certain ecclesiastical functions allowed him to eke out a scant livelihood; that it happened to him to live in Malvern and in London, etc. Nonsense, all that; how could one believe that he really lived anywhere?

Yet, he probably did; poets are not bound to be always deceitful; their own private experience and real feelings are, after all, the subject-matter readiest of access to them. Why should they ever go such a long way to invent, when it would be so easy for them to copy? Of course, when they tell us tales of wonder, or of events markedly to their advantage, we should be on our guard; but when they plainly state plain facts, of small interest if untrue, contradicted by no document and by no historical fact, the chances are that they speak from experience, the personal element in the statement being precisely what makes it seem interesting to them. We are not bound to believe that a real eagle carried to the House of Fame, beyond the spheres, such a precious and consid-

¹"The Autobiographical Elements in *Piers the Plowman*," in the *Journal of Germanic Philology*, Bloomington (Ind.), Vol. III, 1901, No. 4.

erable load as was our friend Chaucer. But when the same Chaucer describes himself as going home after having made his "rekenynges," and reading books until his sight is "dasewyd,"¹ we would be quite wrong in displaying here any of our elegant skepticism: for it so happens that documentary evidence corroborates the poet's statements, and authentic records tell us of the sort of "rekenynges" the poet had to attend to and the kind of work which would impair his sight.

Why believe, says Prof. Jack, that our author was, in any way, connected with Malvern? He names those hills, it is true, but "of these he gives us no description." Why should he? He may have had some "personal acquaintance with London," but "certainly we cannot affirm that he ever lived there or even ever saw it."²

Well may one be skeptical about such skepticism. When, in the course of a work of the imagination, among fancy cities and real ones, we find the absolutely uncalled-for sentence: "Se transporte à Chinon, ville fameuse, voire première du monde," we would be wrong to suppose that this name has been put there at random; for the city was the birthplace of the author of the work, Rabelais. When, in the same work, we find that Pantagruel "estoit logé à l'Hostel saint Denis" in Paris, nothing would be more natural, it seems, than to suppose the name to be a chance one. Closer scrutiny has recently shown that the Hostel Sainct Denis belonged to the abbot of St. Denis and housed Benedictine monks who came to Paris to study. Rabelais was a member of the order, and must have frequented this same hostel at some of his stays in Paris, hence his choice.³

Nothing more elegant, to be sure, than skepticism. Yet it should not be carried too far, for fear of hard facts giving the lie to its fancies. What more airy being than Ronsard's Cassandre, with the conventional praise of her perfections, sonnet after sonnet embodying ideas, similes, and eulogies which had done duty

¹*Hous of Fame*, II, 145, 150.

²Pp. 406, 413.

³H. Clouzot, *Modern Language Review*, July, 1908, p. 404.

numberless times from the days of Laura if not even earlier. Yet this typical creature of a poet's brain has just turned out to have been a real woman, and to have been such as Ronsard described her, with dark hair and complexion, living at Blois, and bearing in real life the romantic and unusual name of Cassandre, for she was Cassandra Salviati, an Italian.

Prof. Jack seems to have himself felt some misgivings, for which credit should be accorded him. After having started on such lines that he was nearing apace the conclusion that *Piers Plowman* had grown somehow, without having been written by any man who might have led any sort of life anywhere; after having taken the unnecessary trouble to investigate whether the author did actually sleep and have the dreams he speaks of (an investigation of the carrying capacities of Chaucer's eagle would be welcome); and after also undertaking to refute the opinion, advanced by no one, that Langland was "a professional wanderer" and "spent his life in roaming about," Prof. Jack comes to terms. And his terms are not so very unacceptable after all. He admits, as "quite probable, that in this satirical picture of the clergy of that day the poet also had in mind the struggles by which he himself rose, and was at that moment rising, above the low moral level of the churchmen about him;" that the statements concerning his being nicknamed Long Will, living in Cornhill, etc., "may be true;" that we may find "between the lines" in the poem "valuable hints for drawing a rough sketch of his life;" that he himself, Prof. Jack, should "not be understood as denying to it all autobiographical elements; the opinions, hopes, and fears of the author are surely here."¹ This is enough to enable us to maintain that Prof. Jack has not "conclusively proved" the autobiographical details in the poem to be "not genuine, but mere parts of the fiction." He has not, and does not pretend that he has.

So long as no positive text or fact contradicts the plain statements in the poem, we hold ourselves entitled to take them for what they are given, and to consider, at the very least, that the sum of accessible evidence favors our views rather than others' skepticism.

¹ Pp. 410, 412, 413, 414.

We persist therefore in adhering to our former faith, and in rejecting the hypothesis of the four or five authors revising one single work, each taking care to write as if he was an older man than his predecessor, leaving behind him nothing else in the same style, and dying, each in succession, to make room for the next. We hold that the differences in merit, opinions, dialect, etc., do not justify a belief in a difference of authorship, and that the shifted passage so cleverly fitted in by C at its proper place, far from hurting our views, confirms them. We believe, in a word, that, as we read in one of the MSS, "William Langland made Pers Ploughman."

Before coming to an end, however, I must repeat that, strongly as I dissent from Prof. Manly's conclusions, my gratitude toward him for his discovery and my sympathy for the sincerity and earnestness of his search, equal those of any other student. It is certainly difficult to enjoy better company than Professor Manly's on the road leading to the shrine of "St. Treuth."

J. J. JUSSERAND

WASHINGTON
November 9, 1908



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